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TRUST FOR TRUST.

BY A. J. BARROWCLIFFE,

AUTHOR OF "AMBERHILL."

"For every inch of woman in the world,
Ay, every dram of woman's flesh, is false,
If she be."—*Winter's Tale.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER I.

ABSOLUTE POWER.

Life is a coasting voyage from headland to headland. There is little change in things about us while we cross the broad bays between. The rock behind and the rock before seem long unaltered; the waves repeat themselves; the same coast line is on the same horizon and the swift vessel might be a ship becalmed. But when the headland long before us is at last beside us, when we pass the rock we were approaching and lose the distant coast line under the closer cliffs, the flight is felt, all things are moving and changing; we start from our sea-

dreams to feel the inevitable speed and the peril of the rocks; till the point is rounded, the coast again bends inwards, and its receding outline lulls us across the waters of another bay.

It was so with Anthony Forrest and his wife, his friends, and the ancient Borough of Porchester. Three or four years passed over them without bringing any particular change in their relations towards one another. At least it seemed so. From the day of Anthony's election he became master of the corporate destinies of the town.

His talents and energies were too considerably in excess of anything his colleagues had to boast of for his position to be left in doubt. As a man six feet high inevitably lifts his head above any average crowd, so Mr. Forrest stood at once, by nature, the leading man in the corporation of Porchester. He was elected Mayor, and re-elected. His plans for local improvements were adopted, as they deserved to be. Fine buildings sprang up in the town; foul streets were cleansed; fat constables, the terror of nur-

series but the hope of evil-doers, were changed for lither and swifter men; there was a wholesome whipping of little boys in the churchyard on Sundays, and, generally, under orchard walls. The plague of beggars was abated. Sewers and gutters, startled by pickaxe and shovel from their ancient lethargy, did unaccustomed service in abating the plague of smells. The public charities were invigorated; the public schools improved; the markets better managed; the ancient pavements metamorphosed; and everything opposed to the prosperity of the town, rapidly removed.

That is, everything but the dangers of the Bridge Hill. The schemes of the Porcites had of course received a death-blow. The new road and the demolition of the Borough Wall were no longer spoken of in public. Accidents, however, were continually happening at the old fatal spot, and as the traffic of the town grew larger under the vigorous new management of its affairs, the annual list of killed and wounded went on increasing. Mr. Forrest saw this with

considerable uneasiness. Perhaps it touched his conscience. Certainly it was a source of growing peril to his power. The old cry might be revived by it any day, and Mr. Hornbeam, as the champion of humanity, might be able to defy even the recollection of Mr. Fowkes' trousers. So in his fourth year of office, Anthony proposed a plan for the mitigation of the evil. He proposed to pull down some of the tall houses at the bend in the dangerous road; to widen this part of the High Street a little—much was not practicable from the nature of the ground — and to give a somewhat better view of the street, before and behind, by the removal of these lofty buildings. It was a very fair plan, and was certain to make the danger less; but this circumstance proved sufficient to upset it. The old Porcite party saw plainly enough that if they meant to retain any hope of future success during any mortal life-time, they must at all events defeat this plan. Let the evil grow as it had been growing, and they might still look for victory and vengeance. To abate it,

still worse, to spend the Borough funds for its abatement, by any scheme except their own, would be final ruin to their cause. Roused to sudden action after three years of dismay, they found themselves stronger than they expected, and Anthony, who had the further disadvantage of being taken unprepared, was unable to carry his project.

The first check experienced by a man accustomed to have his own way, invariably makes him angry, and his anger seldom fails to bring a second defeat upon him, worse perhaps than the first. Anthony felt the rejection of his scheme as a spoilt child feels the shutting of the pantry-door. Surprise rose arm-in-arm with indignation. He was not only baffled, but offended. What he said was bitter; what he did was cross. He wounded some of his real friends, disgusted many of his doubtful ones, and raised the question—the dry-rot of all despotisms—whether it was really a good thing to let one man do as he pleased.

Mr. Forrest must have been blessed with

enemies blinder than flies in autumn, if they had not perceived that the vantage ground had suddenly become their own. Mr. Fowkes, for example, was not what might be called a man of rapid instinct, but he could taste good wine and see an ammonite, and it occurred to him, even as he sat pondering with his pipe between his lips, that the continuance of Mr. Forrest's power in Porchester did not, under the circumstances, appear quite so certain as the return of quarter-day. Expressing himself to this effect in the presence of Mr. Hornbeam, he was answered by a wink, a touch on the shoulder, an emphatic nodding of the head, and an invitation to step on one side a little. It was at the door of the Four All's that this took place, and having led the landlord from this public situation to the corner of the house, Mr. Hornbeam announced to him, in as low a tone as he was master of, that the very moment had at length arrived.

"That's it," said Mr. Fowkes. "That's what I was thinking."

"The very moment, Fowkes, for the emancipation of the Borough, for casting off that incubus which we groan and writhe under."

"That's it," replied Mr. Fowkes, and Mr. Hornbeam continued.

"We are preyed upon by an ogre, who has his den in the Bank parlor and his shambles on the Bridge Hill, where he drinks the best blood of Porchester. We must send him back to his den and break up his shambles."

Mr. Hornbeam spoke with energy. He had perhaps prepared these powerful metaphors for the next election, and was willing to try their influence on the landlord's nerves.

"That's it," said Mr. Fowkes. "Break 'em up!"

"We shall do it, Fowkes, take my word for it. The town is indignant. Forrest knows it, but he's too proud to give in a hair's breadth. All the better for us. His arrogance is meat and drink to our party. We wanted nothing but a new man to start against him, and the new man is found."

"Then that's it," answered the landlord; "provided he'll do."

"The very man for the purpose. A man of the people, Fowkes; a successful man, with money in his pockets and a will of his own. Came here a month ago and bought the quarry; came again yesterday and bought a house to live in; settles here immediately; has taken up his freedom; had an offer from our secret committee —we must have you on it again, Fowkes—and stands for us at the next election. Now, Mr. Fowkes, there is news for you. Private, mind; as still as death for the present. Are you going to the ogre's court to see the presentation?"

"No," said Mr. Fowkes. "I'd as soon try to lick the missis."

"Then go and see it; by all means go and see it. The new man will be there, and the more of us the better. A little dust in the eyes, you know; nothing like a little dust in the eyes."

A squeal from the back premises was followed by the sound of a well-known voice.

"Fowkes! Fowkes! The pig's put his nose in the rat-trap, and if it isn't off in two minutes ——"

The landlord vanished over the wall.

CHAPTER II.

KING AND QUEEN.

The presentation spoken of by Mr. Hornbeam was to be an event in the annals of Porchester. Mr. Forrest was to receive from the hands of his supporters and admirers a silver candlestick with four branches, symbolic of his four years of office, each branch representing a horn of plenty, and each plenteous horn being supposed to empty itself upon the town. The idea originated with Mr. Hobbes, and was regarded as a brilliant inspiration for covering Mr. Forrest's late defeat and applying balm to his ill-humour. It was the end of summer, the days were hot and fine, and the presentation was to take place publicly in the Borough Wall meadow. A platform was erected against the old ruin, with crimson cloth over

it, and a kind of throne was prepared there for Mr. Forrest and his lady.

In the morning, an hour or two before the ceremony, Mary, richly dressed in blue silk and pearls, was sitting in a reclining chair under the old apple-tree in the garden behind the Bank, waiting for her husband. There was a little boy near her, between two and three years old, digging with a wooden spade for worms in the border. She had no other occupation but that of watching him, and she needed none, for this was her only child. His yellow hair curled under his straw hat. His little lips pouted with grave interest over his work. His baby hands struck down the spade with purpose and authority, as if he used a servant, and was its master.

People said that Master Forrest was already a spoilt child, and these were not without their justification. His father's pride in the beautiful and spirited boy was excessive; his indulgence unbounded; his flattery perpetual. He expected at the same time an absolute obedience to his own commands, and resented the opposition of his baby

son almost as if he were his equal. The child, admired and caressed one moment, and suffered to transgress at pleasure all orders issuing from any but the paternal lips, was checked decisively, sent out of the room imperatively, or punished with the rigor of offended justice when the little will ran a-tilt against the great one. The child's spirit was not subdued by this. He was immensely fond of his father; but he was growing up as vain, as daring, and as imperious towards all the rest of the world as a young Spartan or the son of an emperor. Mary's judgment in the matter did not quite agree with her husband's. She would have had him less indulgent and less severe. The child's conceit and waywardness made her fearful sometimes, especially when her own uniform gentleness seemed to lose its influence over him, and she found herself holding a tiger-cub in a net of gossamer. But she was young and knew it; she was the mother of the most beautiful boy in Porchester. Her soul trusted that Anthony must, of course, be right, and that all would turn out well in the end.

"Tony," she said, when the boy threw down his spade, "I think you must go in and be dressed."

The child came a little nearer to her, looking up at the apple-tree.

"Mamma, me want two apples."

"Two apples! What will you do with them?"

"Me want two apples for the lady."

"What lady is it you want them for?"

"Shan't tell."

"Can't have them, then."

"Yes, me can. Me can have two apples, mamma."

"Why, how am I to get them, Tony? See how high they are."

"You get up the tree, mamma. Me lift you."

"I should spoil my frock, Tony."

The child took hold of her dress.

"You got a fine frock on, mamma."

"I am going to see company. You must get ready to help me when the people come."

"Me going to be shown, mamma?"

"You are going to see some ladies and gentlemen."

"Me frock not fine enough; me frock dirty. You wash it this minute, mamma."

"Call Betsy to change your frock, and make you tidy, Tony."

The boy ran towards the house.

"Betty, Betty, you come and dress me; me going to be shown."

The nursemaid was waiting for him in the door-way, but Mr. Forrest coming out, dressed for the ceremony, caught him up in his arms and held him in the air.

"Ah, young prince! where are you now, sir? Where are you going in such a hurry?"

The boy laughed and wriggled.

"You put me down! you put me down! me kick you."

"Kick away, sir. Where are you going, I say?"

"Going to Betty. You put me down: people coming this minute, and me frock dirty. Mamma, mamma, papa tickling me. You get away; you get away!" and a scream of laughter followed.

"Now go and be dressed, young coxcomb," said Anthony, laying him on the grass. "Make yourself as fine as you can, and astonish all the people. You shall be king of them one of these days."

"Me be king now, papa; me be king of all the people."

"You will, will you? What are you going to do with them all?"

"Knock 'em all down and tickle 'em."

"You're a fine fellow, sir. Get up; Betsy's waiting for you."

"No; me not get up. Betty come and dress me here."

"Nothing of the kind, Master Tony. Now, sir, there's no time to lose. Stand on your legs. March! take him away, Betsy."

The boy gave Betsy a slap in the face, as she stooped to pick him up, and rolled himself on the grass again, kicking.

"Come, my love," said Mary, who had left her seat under the apple-tree, "get up now; you want to be dressed, you know."

"Me want to beat you; me want two apples; me don't want Betty. Go away—go away!" and he flung his little feet, dirty with his digging, against Mary's beautiful dress. Anthony immediately laid hold of him by the head and the heels.

"What, sir, is that the way you behave yourself? Look at mamma's dress. Go and ask her pardon this moment."

"Me go and beat her!" cried the boy, very red in the face, and with a violent struggle to get away. His father boxed his ears, the child screamed, and the nursemaid, under assault and battery, carried him into the house.

"Dearest," said Mary, laying her hand on Anthony's arm, "I wish you would not be so severe and sudden with Tony; I 'm sure it does him no good." She had winced at the blow with which the boy's ear was tingling, and was as red as the child himself.

"Those who are born to command," replied her husband, "must be taught to obey. My son would be spoilt, Mary, under your ineffectual correction."

"I am sure he is being spoilt by your sternness, Anthony. I am certain of it. His temper grows worse every day."

"If it is so, Mary, it would only be modest to see the cause in your own mismanagement rather than in mine. He is under your care from morning till night, while the influence of my discipline is necessarily limited to such occasions as the present."

"Yes, dearest; but for that very reason he thinks all the more of what you do and say. I know I could have got him off quietly just now if you had not interfered."

"Interfered, Mary! Can you possibly think I can abstain from interfering in the education of my own son? I, who am responsible to Heaven for whatever his character may be. A father's authority is the basis of a child's duty, and the first thing he must be made to feel."

"Well, dearest, don't let us quarrel about it; but I'm sure you are wrong."

"Mary, that is the chief defect in your own character. How can you, with any consideration

for a wife's position, assert your own opinion in that positive way?"

"Dearest, I am sorry, but when I see ——"

"See with my eyes, my love," he said, interrupting her, "and your vision will be better. We have not time for further discussion. I must take you to the meadow, and the child can follow with his nurse. I hope you can shake that dirt from your dress; the rascal has soiled it."

"It won't show," said Mary, rubbing her skirt with her handkerchief, and they walked together across the grass to the private path leading to the Borough Wall meadow. Anthony looked rather majestic, and Mary a little obstinate. She was not convinced, even by her husband's authority, and the treatment of their boy was fast becoming a sore point between them.

"I wonder who the lady is that Tony has spoken of once or twice; he never will tell me. He wanted two apples for her just now," said Mary, as they left the garden.

"Some one who has seen him out of doors, and called him a fine fellow, most likely."

"I'm only afraid it may be somebody who gives him sweetmeats without my knowing. He'll do anything to get them, and they are not good for him."

"You should ask Betsy."

"She says she knows nothing about it, but I found something sticky on his sleeve one day."

"Very likely. Mary, if the Hathornes come to the presentation to-day, I wish you to treat them coldly."

"The Hathornes, Anthony!" said Mary, looking up in surprise.

"Yes; Richard Hathorne is either a secret enemy or a very useless friend. The foreman of his mill has become a regular partizan of Hornbeam's. We lost ten votes at least in the last contest by his instrumentality, for he has great influence among the men. I told Hathorne the other day he ought to be ashamed of himself for keeping him in his employment, but he refused to discharge him."

"Why, dearest, you wouldn't have him dis-

charged for such a reason? He must surely have a right to his own opinion."

"Every man has a right to his own opinion, Mary, when it is an honest and rational one, but I myself have taken the trouble to talk with this man for half an hour, and have explained to him the absurdity of Mr. Hornbeam's principles. He was perfectly dogged and immovable. You might as well reason with a gate-post—the man is either a knave or a fool, and as he is much too clever to be a fool, there's no doubt about his knavery. I pointed this out to Hathorne, but it made no impression upon him; and it is such a flagrant piece of impertinence on his part, it shows such a want of any proper feeling of gratitude, to say nothing of the public principles involved, that our opinion of his conduct ought to be expressed decidedly. Treat him and Lucy with reserve, therefore, if they come to the meadow. It may bring him back to a sense of duty. You may as well bow without offering your hand."

"Bow to Lucy, and not offer my hand! Dear love, how can I?"

"I see no difficulty, my love. You have only to restrain yourself."

"I would do whatever you liked, as far as Richard is concerned; but Lucy! why, you know we kiss each other in the streets."

"That's the very reason why I wish you to appear cold to her. Her brother will feel it more than any slight upon himself, and the effect will be all the more powerful."

"But Lucy's my dearest friend."

"Not dearer than your husband, Mary."

"No, surely. But to think of only bowing to her! It seems quite ridiculous; I'm sure I should laugh outright, if I treated her so," said Mary, trying to put a smiling face upon a matter which was beginning to wear a tearful one.

"I trust you would do nothing of the kind, for it would compromise your husband's dignity," he answered. "Remember, Mary, I am serious in desiring this. Well, Hobbes, are we past the time? Are we keeping you waiting?"

"Half Porchester, my dear Mr. Anthony, and all its beauty and intellect, except their chief

ingredients, which I see before me, are waiting at the Borough Wall. But you are not late, not a minute behind time, Mr. Forrest; only enthusiasm shakes the hour-glass, you perceive; impatience moves the shadow on the dial, and an admiring multitude sends me to see how soon its wishes may be gratified."

Mr. Hobbes, with his usual smile about his long lip and angular cheek bone, had met them at the entrance to the meadow, and now led them to the back of the ruins, where a little private tent was pitched, with a looking-glass in it, for the final arrangement of Mary's toilet before mounting the platform. The spectators were in front of the old wall, and were kept there by a temporary barrier of posts and ropes; but as soon as Mr. and Mrs. Forrest were recognised, crossing the end of the field under Mr. Hobbes' escort, a waving of hats and handkerchiefs took place and a loud cheering was heard. This of course was renewed when Anthony led his wife to the seat prepared for them, and bowed acknowledgment to the gay crowd before him. An awning, drawn overhead

from the ruin to the three ash-trees, covered the platform and a considerable space round it; under its shade, rows of forms, with an avenue between them from one of the openings between the trees to the foot of the dais, were occupied by the ladies of Porchester in smiles and holiday dresses. Their lords stood behind them on either side, and in front of the trees the common people pressed up in considerable numbers to see the ceremony. Groups of girls were picking late daisies round about, and parties of boys played cricket in various directions, throwing down their bats, however, and starting off with hue and cry if any solitary damsel ventured to cross the field at a distance from her companions. A deputation, consisting of the members of the Borough Wall Club and half a dozen other men of influence in the town, proceeded up the avenue between the forms, with Mr. Hobbes at their head, bearing the branched candlestick, and after the shout excited by this spectacle had subsided, the presentation address was read.

At one corner of the covered space under one

of the three ash-trees, a small knot of the Porcite leaders stood looking at the ceremony over the heads of the ladies. Most of them had joined in the cheering, with sardonic looks, however, and whispered confidences. They were very well known, with one exception; and were themselves objects of remark and merriment to many of the company, who understood of course that they had come to quiz the proceedings rather than to join in them, and were to be regarded as acknowledged spies for their own party.

The single stranger among them was the "new man," about to be started as Anthony's opponent in the coming election, whom Mr. Hornbeam had brought to the meadow that he might see beforehand, and in the pride of power, the antagonist with whom he had to grapple. The stranger was a man of middle size, about thirty years old, with a square, resolute face, heavy brows, and a complexion naturally pale, but darkened by habitual exposure. He had the air of one who had risen from a lower rank by the practical nature of his intellect and the energy of his will.

His hands were freckled and hairy, and enlarged about the joints. He stooped a little, like one who has carried weights upon his shoulders. Decision, without grace, was in all his movements. His plain black dress, of excellent cloth, without any sort of ornament, made it probable that he cared for the possession of power much more than its display. There was no vanity about him, but great self-dependence and self-command. He refused Mr. Hornbeam's snuff-box and lozenge-box, and seemed to have no habits of self-indulgence; but there was a gloom in his eyes and the absence of nobler indications than those of strong and vigorous materialism. Altogether he appeared the very man to oppose Anthony with a good prospect of success, and to make their respective parts in the struggle like those of the rising wave and the rock it breaks on.

Now when Mary and her husband arrived with Mr. Hobbes at the private tent behind the ruin, it happened that Lucy Hathorne was just leaving it, hanging on her brother's arm. She had been in to see that it was ready for Mary, to lay a

nosegay before the looking-glass, and to stir up the attendant, who, gossiping with her friends, had allowed two enterprising young gentlemen of the age of five to creep under the barriers and steal a banner. The meeting was rather sudden. Anthony bowed in the most formal way. Mary, blushing crimson, glanced at his face, and seemed for an instant to hesitate, but Lucy ran to her, in her usual hearty manner, with her arms held out, and Mary returned the embrace, kissed her, and went hastily into the tent. Anthony followed.

"I am astonished, Mary."

"Dearest, I couldn't help it."

Nothing more was said. Both felt that it was not the time for a dispute. Mary arranged her dress as quickly as she could, and her husband took her to the platform, but neither of them was able to get rid of a heightened color and a certain air of uneasiness before they took their seats. The Porticites, bent on admiration, saw in their faces only the signs of health and pleasure, but a sharper criticism was going on

among the little group under the ash-tree in the corner.

"Here he comes," Mr. Hornbeam whispered to the stranger. "Red as a turkey-cock, and in a pet, I fancy."

The other did not answer. He was leaning against the trunk of the tree and looking keenly at the platform.

"A tiff with his wife, I'll be bound," said Hornbeam. "She's as nervous as she can be. How she keeps looking at him and trying to smile."

"Afraid of the public," said the stranger, shortly.

"Not a bit of it. I've seen her as cool as Christmas with a crowd before her. It's a tiff, depend upon it."

"Do they quarrel?" said the other, in the same short manner as before.

"If they don't they will. He's a tyrant, and she's a spirit. Dotes on him though, and he on her. Quite a love-match; took her from the country, and sent her to school. He's proud of

her, and not so much to wonder at. Look how he dresses her. Those pearls are new for the occasion, and the dress came from France; at least, they say so. Did you ever see such hair? you might coin it; and her throat's as white as her pearls, if she didn't blush so. She 's worth looking at, anyhow: but he 's rather a fool to show her off. There 'll be a row one of these days."

"Any children?" asked his companion, whose eyes never left the platform.

"Only one, but he's plenty to manage. They say the father flogs him and the mother won't stand it; but she 'll have to stand it, or flog him herself; a young dare-devil."

The presentation was going on in the meantime. Mr. Hobbes, in a speech full of fun and flattery, magnified the golden days of Porchester and the debt of gratitude incurred by its inhabitants; invoked the spirit of the old Porticus to smile on the august ceremony; produced in a new dress a long standing political joke by which the anxious efforts of the Porcites to

derive the name of Porchester from pigs were ascribed to the swinish origin of the whole party (a joke which invariably brought down cheers and fits of laughter, and had in consequence been exceedingly well worn), touched gracefully on the services of the Borough Wall Club, and facetiously on his own (some one in the crowd calling out "trousers" at this point in his discourse, produced a roar which lasted several minutes), and concluded by first offering the heavy candlestick to Anthony, and then laying it down in the most chivalrous manner at Mary's feet. This little piece of gallantry told to admiration and brought his speech to a triumphant end. "Well done, Hobbes!"—"Hobbes for ever!"—"Hobbes and trousers!"—"Hobbes for Mayor next year!" were shouted round about—"Please the pigs!" cried somebody, and the laughter was uproarious.

With an audience in such excellent humor, the returning of thanks would not have been very difficult to anybody, but Anthony was naturally eloquent, the occasion was inspiring,

and before he sat down the enthusiasm was prodigious. The Porcites themselves joined in it, and at the end, when nobody else could have made himself heard, Mr. Hornbeam's voice rang through the tumult of sound, saying, "Three cheers for Mrs. Forrest." The people gave them like Britons; and Mary, who had scarcely looked at any distant part of the assembly before, casting her eyes upon the corner from which the great voice issued, became suddenly startled by what she saw. Turning quickly to Anthony, she whispered:

"Do you see that man by Mr. Hornbeam, under the tree?"

"Yes; it's the new man, I hear, coming to oppose us."

"It's Owen Williams."

Anthony did not at the moment recollect who Mary meant.

"I understand his name is Williams," he replied; "but what do you know about him?"

"Don't you remember him? Before we were married——" Anthony recollected suddenly, and frowned.

"Impossible! ridiculous! you are mistaken."

"I am not mistaken. I could never forget him."

Anthony's eye glanced down at his wife as if a less retentive memory might have pleased him better. The stranger, who saw that he was recognized, raised his hat gravely. "Take no notice," Anthony whispered, and Mary obeyed him this time and turned her head away.

How the petty overlooker of the stone quarries in her native valley had come to be Mr. Forrest's political opponent in Porchester was past her comprehension, however, and her old dislike for him revived, in company with a new curiosity.

There was a little stir at this moment in the opposite corner of the covered space. The ladies had mustered in such unexpected numbers that the seats provided for them were hardly sufficient, and about a dozen of those who came latest were obliged to stand. One of these was Lucy Hathorne, who had lost her place by going round to Mary's tent with her nosegay. She stood with her brother on one side and Martin Dove

on the other, and by the time the presentation had been made, and Anthony had risen to speak, Mr. Dove became conscious that his fair neighbour was not seated, as she should have been. Distressed by this consciousness, he asked, suddenly:

"Miss Lucy, would you like a chair?"

"Indeed I should, Mr. Dove. I 'm half dead with standing."

"I 'll go and fetch one," said Martin, and off he went. There was no such thing as a chair to be found in the meadow, and Martin, not inclined to return empty-handed, went by the private path to the Bank, and borrowed one from the housemaid. He came back as fast as he could, wondering whether Miss Lucy might have fainted with fatigue in the meantime, and flourishing his prize in the air. In a minute or two the bottom of the chair fell out upon the grass, but as it happened not to touch either his foot or his shoulder, Martin was unconscious of the fact, and walked rapidly on, rejoicing in the greater lightness of his burden.

Meanwhile Mr. Daniel Hobbes, his speech and

office ended for the time, had made his way also to Lucy's side, and, finding her standing, had gone himself in search of a seat. He had given up the search in despair, and was returning to hear the end of Anthony's address, when he saw Martin Dove approaching rapidly.

"Why, bless your heart, Martin, what have you got there?" exclaimed Mr. Hobbes.

"I've got a chair for Miss Lucy," replied the other.

"A chair, Martin! Where is it, my dear fellow? You mean a cat-gallows."

"There it is," said Martin, setting down the open framework and then staring at it with astonishment. "Oh! I forgot to bring the cushion! I'll go back to the Bank and get it!"

"Stop a little," said Mr. Hobbes, laughing and sighing. "Miss Lucy's tired enough already. Let us see if we can't make something of it. Nothing like a little adaptation in cases of emergency."

The box in which the presentation offering had

been brought was lying near, with the lid off. Mr. Hobbes laid the lid upon Martin's skeleton chair, tore down a flag and spread it over for a covering.

"Ah!" said he, "that's better than nothing. Take it to her; the prize is yours; take it to her."

"Won't you take it yourself, Mr. Hobbes? I forgot the cushion, you know," said Martin, bashfully.

"No, Martin; no. It's yours by right. I've struck my colors; I've laid down my flag, you see. Take it to her, my boy."

The youth, still half-hesitating, but with a glow of pleasure on his cheek, took the bannered seat to Lucy, while Mr. Hobbes looked after him, smiling, but with tears in his eyes.

"Twenty years! twenty years!" he said to himself. "Well, well! I'm young enough to look for fossils in the quarry, and there's a deal to be done there."

The fact was that Daniel Hobbes and Martin Dove were rivals, but Martin's hankering after

Lucy had been a matter of jest and notoriety for several years, while Mr. Hobbes' flame had never seen the light, or at least had never attracted any notice. He was looked upon as an elderly man, and of course a bachelor; not in the sense of a man who may naturally marry, but of one who naturally will not. His liking for Lucy and the attention he paid her were ascribed to fatherly feelings and his genial disposition, for in general he liked everybody and was the especial friend of ladies in the abstract. But Mr. Hobbes was diffident to an extreme on this one subject of his love for Lucy. His own age was so magnified in his own eyes that the idea of offering himself to her, as an overt act, appeared to his imagination something like gray Methuselah proposing to Jephtha's daughter. He was aware also of Martin's tenderness in this direction; and seeing with great simplicity a remarkable fitness in a match between him and Lucy, the thought of stepping in to sever their happy loves seemed to transform his own personality into that of a Turk with red eyes and a

scimitar. So for several years he had been endeavouring to treat Miss Lucy with the most distinguished kindness, and not to desire anything in return, in the hope that his untoward passion might fossilize itself in the midst of his heart; dying without dissolving; keeping the form of life without the struggle or the pain. The petrifying process went on but slowly, however. Lucy's eyes sent living pulses through the obstinate organism. It was no more a fossil than the heart that held it; nor likely to be any sooner. Mr. Hobbes therefore was leading a life of self-immolation. He had struck his colors, as he said, but, though making no resistance, he kept on the dangerous field.

It was with a sigh that he saw Martin Dove again approach the spot where he knew Lucy, though unseen, was standing. Mr. Forrest had finished his speech; Mr. Hornbeam's voice had been lifted up; the company were cheering, and those behind were pressing forward to get a better look at Mary. Martin found it difficult to make his way among the moving enthusiasts, and,

holding the sacred chair by the legs, he raised it so as to put his head between them, in order to take up less room and pass more easily. To liberate his hands, he next proposed to himself to let his burden rest thus on the crown of his hat, forgetting that the laws of cohesion were not operating between the frame of the chair and the box-lid lying on it. As he took away his hands, the frame dropped immediately over his shoulders, its front bar rubbing his nose, and its four legs grazing the elbows of as many Porticites in their descent, while the temporary seat, lodging for a moment only on his hat, slipped forward over the heads of the next row, and unhappily struck Lucy's arm pretty heavily as it fell. Martin saw the catastrophe and sprang to avert it, but he was himself a prisoner in the wooden frame; his knees struck against its edges and in an instant he lay sprawling. This was the cause of the stir which happened at the moment when Owen Williams was recognised by Mary. She turned her head in time to see a little commotion, but not to know what was the matter. Lucy's arm was seriously

hurt, and Mr. Dove's nose was bleeding, but Lucy, taken half-fainting from the crowd, was carried home by her brother, while Martin, with his handkerchief to his face, followed in grief and consternation, and the noise and bustle prevented those upon the platform from being participators in the unlucky scene. It became known, however, that some lady had got hurt in the crowd; and Anthony, rather annoyed at the occurrence which was the sole disaster of the day, brought the meeting to a close as soon as he could.

Inquiry being made for Mr. Hobbes near the end of the proceedings, he was found to be missing; but he reappeared afterwards in the Banker's garden when Anthony and his wife returned thither from the meadow.

Mr. Forrest was on the whole exceedingly well satisfied. The ovation had been magnificent, and though he knew that the issue of the next election was not to be judged of by anything that had occurred that day, the homage of so large a number of his fellow-townsmen, to say nothing of their wives and daughters, was gratifying and

inspiring. Above all, the reception given to his wife, the compliment paid her by the very leader of the opposite party, the enthusiastic applause which it had called forth, and the unmistakeable signs of admiration for and interest in her which his vigilant eyes observed in all directions, gave the finishing touch to his satisfaction, and he took her home with greater pride in her than he had ever felt before.

"You have done credit to your husband and your town, Mary; you have delighted me and won the hearts of all our party. If you could only have commanded yourself so as to carry out my views with regard to the Hathornes, my gratification would have been unbounded."

Mary could not help feeling pleasantly excited by the day's proceedings, and, being very anxious to please her husband without sacrificing her friends, she replied in an apologetic tone that she was extremely sorry to disappoint him in anything, that she had taken care to do as he desired towards Hathorne himself, but that Lucy's open arms were irresistible, and as she felt sure she

never should be able to treat her coldly when it came to the point, she did hope he would not insist upon it.

"That," he answered, "is a weakness, my love, which you should be able to overcome. It is our duty to show our disapprobation of improper conduct whenever we see it; more especially so when our friends, over whom we have the greatest influence, are the offenders, and Hathorne's conduct has been so highly improper that even for his own sake he ought to be made to feel it."

Mary was puzzled as to her reply; but they were entering their own garden and Mr. Hobbes met them there.

"Why, my dear Hobbes, where have you been hiding? We had to finish up without you after all."

"A melancholy accident, Mr. Anthony, of which the unhappy cause stands before you. Miss Lucy's arm is badly hurt; not broken, thank God, but a terrible bruise—a most unfortunate bruise. I deserve nothing less than the pillory, or at least the thumbscrew, I assure you."

"Lucy hurt!" cried Mary.

"How did it happen, Hobbes?" said Mr. Forrest.

"Miss Lucy is hurt considerably, I grieve to say, my dear madam; not a dangerous wound, but a severe one, to draw a technical distinction. The surgeon prescribed leeches, and has sent her to bed. My fault entirely; my fault entirely! I had the temerity to turn carpenter without knowing the trade; made a seat and forgot the nails; fancied the laws of gravitation would keep a heavy piece of timber on the four legs of a chair, instead of which they precipitated it upon Miss Lucy's shoulder while in the act of making its way to her through the crowd. The presumption of ignorance is astounding and its results disastrous. Miss Lucy's arm and my conscience will suffer for at least a fortnight, but happily, as I said, it is not dangerous—only severe."

"And Lucy is sent to bed and has leeches ordered?" Mary asked, in great anxiety.

"Yes, my dear Mrs. Forrest; those unpleasant facts admit neither of denial nor mitigation; as

to the leeches, I fear they will do their duty, which is a painful circumstance both in act and in contemplation—especially in connexion with Miss Lucy's arm."

Mary looked in her husband's face with eyes full of tears, and something more. He understood her look; his forehead flushed, but his eye softened, and he yielded.

"Go to her, Mary."

The smile he got in answer would have been well bought at the cost of a much greater sacrifice. Perhaps he felt this. At any rate he looked extremely happy as his wife flitted from him. Taking Mr. Hobbes very warmly by the arm, he led him into the house to talk over and express his pleasure in the chief events of the day.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW MAN.

Mr. Owen Williams left the Borough Wall meadow in the society of Mr. Hornbeam, dined with that gentleman, and after spending an hour or two in a state of unusual taciturnity, listening, but rarely replying to the political conversation of his host, drove over to the stone quarry by himself in the cool of the evening. The workmen were leaving when he arrived. He stopped one of them to take care of his gig, made some short remarks to the foreman, and went down alone into the silent hollow. The excavation was a considerable one, in the form of a wide pit, irregular in shape, not more than twenty feet in depth at present, but with signs of vigorous preparation for extended working. The stony strata,

in regular and nearly horizontal layers, gave a look of masonry to the quarry walls where their lines were brought to light by the cutting, and furze bushes, with their roots dangling through the loosened soil, fringed the edge of the hollow. Mr. Williams having descended, stood still in the centre, looked round him two or three times, stepped up to a spot where the workmen had been preparing a blast, examined the arrangement and moved one of the irons, and then began very slowly to walk round the quarry, with his eyes generally on the ground, picking up a bit of stone now and then, turning it in his hand and throwing it aside. So he continued walking till it was nearly dark. Not a sound could reach him except that of his own footsteps, and the occasional rattle of the fragments he threw away. If he wanted quiet he had found it; and if solitude could help his thoughts, they were likely to come to a satisfactory conclusion. He left the quarry, however, and re-seated himself in his gig without any sign of satisfaction in his countenance. It was grave, sullen, and dark, like that of a man who

is thinking closely and not pleasantly about some difficult but unavoidable question in which a good deal is involved. He drove back slowly to the hotel in the market-place, where, his house being unfurnished, he was staying; sat down in the coffee-room to read the newspapers, and about ten o'clock in the evening ordered tea in his bedroom and a fire; for, although it was summer, Mr. Williams foresaw that he should not go to bed that night, and thought he might be cold. Keeping the tea-caddy and kettle in possession, he locked his door, put his travelling writing-desk on the table and sat down before it, examined a few papers and memoranda, and then subsided into a state of deep abstraction, with his feet on the fender, his elbow on the desk, and his chin in his hand.

When Williams left his place in the Welsh stone-quarries five or six years before, the reports concerning him were none of them correct, though there was some foundation for the one which affirmed that his father was dead, and had left him five hundred pounds. Report, in this case,

had hardly done itself justice; for while it exaggerated one half of the truth, it gave only a miniature of the other. Owen's father was not dead, but his son had received intelligence that he was dying; and when he did die, a fortnight afterwards, his property, to the astonishment of everybody in Milford Haven, proved to be worth nearly ten times the amount supposed. Owen himself was surprised by the extent of his inheritance, but he knew his father's character to be something like his own, and had guessed beforehand that the estate would be worth looking after. He had, in fact, looked forward to this event as the probable turning-point in his own future fortunes, and without giving way to any unfilial impatience, for he and his father kept at a distance from one another and were on pretty good terms, it often occurred to him that the old man's life must be getting rather dreary, and that if he were, without unnecessary delay, to exchange it for a better, there would be nothing undutiful in writing Amen for his epitaph. He had one special reason, moreover, for wishing to stand in

his father's shoes in a pecuniary sense. Saying little, but working hard and thinking shrewdly, he had discovered certain properties in a particular kind of stone which he saw could be turned to immense account and must make the fortune of anyone who had a patent for their application and sufficient means to bring the matter into public notice. He might readily have found men of capital willing enough to share the venture with him, or his father might have been induced to find the funds for getting the patent secured, but neither of these ideas suited the disposition of Owen Williams. He had made his discovery; he perfectly knew its value; it was safe in his own bosom; and rather than divulge it to any living creature, who at the last moment might cunningly rob him of its fruit, he would wait twenty years in silence, perfecting his method day by day, verifying his experiments, repeating his calculations, and sullenly enjoying in fancy the foretaste of an unlimited success. The only thing that had ever tempted him to change his mind, was his passion for Mary Griffiths. When he

saw her, and still more when he thought of her in solitude, he was scarcely master of himself; and when, after his own rejection, a rich lover came wooing and winning her, the thought that if he had been rich himself he might have had a different answer, very nearly upset his patience. He was on the point of taking his secret to a wealthy man in the neighbourhood, and trying at all risks to make it immediately productive, but he was too clear-sighted not to see that, with regard to Mary, time and her accepted lover made fearful odds against him; that in plain fact he had lost his chance; that Mary would be a wedded wife before his patent was at work; and that what he thought of doing was, for the end proposed, neither more nor less than a piece of frenzy. So he did not do it. His passion became a bitterness known only to the strong and silent. His hatred for his successful rival grew into an instinct, and in the meantime there came the news that his father was on his death-bed. Owen Williams said nothing to anybody. He left his work, put his bundle on his shoulder,

walked up the pass, and in a day or two made his appearance at Milford Haven.

The inheritance to which he succeeded shortly afterwards would have satisfied most men in his condition of life, but Owen's views were of another order. He turned everything at once into money, and went to London. There he immediately secured his patent; and in a few months those interested in the matter were astonished by the admirable simplicity and clear advantage of a new invention brought out in the most business-like and satisfactory way. The success was rapid and unbounded. In three years Mr. Williams was a man of considerable property, increasing income, and great commercial influence. Mr. Hornbeam, who had extensive building contracts in various parts of the country, met him about this time. They did business together, and met again. Mr. Hornbeam came to desire the opinion of Mr. Williams respecting some works near Porchester, and entertained him as his guest one day. The affairs of the flourishing and spirited town were spoken of; and Mr. Hornbeam,

seeing that his visitor took considerable interest in them, and seemed to enjoy his account of the plans on foot for Mr. Forrest's overthrow, was struck with the idea that Williams was just the man to turn the political scale, and that it was a great pity he did not live at Porchester. He said as much, and in order to interest his guest still further, he took him a drive round the neighbourhood, pointing out its mineral treasures, its central situation, and whatever else appeared advantageous in a business point of view. Williams took these advances in his usual silent way, though with a certain appearance of complacency; kept his thoughts chiefly to himself, and made his own observations. When they drove past the quarry, however, he asked Mr. Hornbeam to stop for a few minutes. His eye had detected something peculiar in the formation. He got down, examined the stone and the works, put two or three questions to the workmen, and returned to Mr. Hornbeam, satisfied that the owner of the quarry was working it to little purpose, and was not aware of its value.

"I want a little of that sort of stone," said he, "if it could be had cheap."

"Cheap enough," said Mr. Hornbeam. "The man's out at elbows, I know. He'd sell it for what it costs him getting."

"It costs him twice as much as it need do, the way he goes to work," replied Williams. "The cheapest way would be to buy the quarry. It can't be worth much."

Mr. Hornbeam agreed that it was worth very little, and might be bought in all likelihood for still less. Mr. Williams made a note of the owner's name and dropped the subject; but a few months afterwards he became the proprietor of the quarry, and informed Mr. Hornbeam, to his great delight, that he was coming to live principally at Porchester. The mode of working the stone was changed the day after the deeds were signed, and its former owner saw with infinite disgust, that he had ignorantly parted with a splendid property. This happened, as we have seen, just before the presentation in the Borough Wall meadow. Mr. Williams had

bought a house in Porchester, though it was not yet furnished; had purchased the freedom of the Borough, that he might be qualified as a candidate at the forthcoming election; and had allowed himself to be announced as the "new man," who was to start on the Porcite interest.

The fire burnt busily, and the kettle sang in Mr. Williams' bed-room at the hotel; the candles were newly snuffed, and the shadows in the room were nearly motionless; the sound of wheels and feet was heard frequently from the market-place; shops with lighted windows were open there, and at intervals, dogs barked, men shouted, and women laughed. The fire burnt sedately, the kettle whispered gravely, large heavy wicks obscured the candlelight, shadows, before invisible, went flickering over the walls; the chief noises in the market-place were those of shutters closing and bars clanking, and when anything on wheels was heard, its coming could be distinguished at a distance, and the sound listened to long after it had passed by. The fire had fallen into embers, the

kettle was silent, the shadows on the wall were steady again, but a dull shade moved about the ceiling, as the candles burnt gloomily under their mushroom wicks; no dogs were barking, no feet stirring in the market-place; a little cautious sound somewhere behind the bed showed that mice were in the room. All this time Owen Williams had been sitting in his chair. He got up slowly, stirred the sinking fire, revived the silent kettle, snuffed the candles, made fresh tea in his teapot, drank a cup or two, put a few coals on the embers, and sat down again. That day he had seen Mary and her husband for the first time since they were married. He had thought Mary attractive enough as a peasant girl, as a lady he found her dazzling. He had had his eyes upon her during the whole time of the presentation; had examined every feature in her face, every visible lock of hair, every fold in her dress, every change of posture or expression. He would have stood there an indefinite time, continuing the process.

Now they had been completely separated for several years. Mr. Williams had not forgotten Mary, but he knew well enough that Mrs. Anthony Forrest of Porchester was not very likely to have been troubled by many thoughts about himself. This state of separation was ended. He was coming to play an active part in the life of her own town. He was coming to oppose her husband: to attack him in his stronghold; to give him back, with lashes sharper than those of whipcord, the thrashing of a former well-remembered day. She would be obliged to think of him, and to think of him as her equal, perhaps as her superior. She would have to know that he had risen to fortune and influence as well as herself; that his acts and purposes must be elements in all her husband's future reckonings; that his enmity would be a thing to fear; his friendship a thing to purchase; his success, the downfall of Anthony's power. He had estimated Anthony's strength that day as well as Mary's beauty. "He is a clever fellow, but I can conquer him. He cannot wait: I can. I

am his master." Such was his conclusion. How, then, should Mary think of him, since she must think of him in the time to come?

That was the question which he sat up the whole night to settle with himself. His thoughts were pictures, moving slowly over a dark background of unformed desires. He saw the beginning of the contest. Anthony, contemptuous, but alarmed, straining all his strength to appear secure while he labored to become so; carrying his true fears to his fireside, and making Mary sleepless with anxiety. He saw the end approaching; Mr. Forrest in a minority, rushing in consternation among his friends, urging a final effort, suffering all the torture of despair. He saw his own victory won: the power wrested from his rival: the town delivering itself over to Owen Williams; presenting him with candlesticks; applauding and obeying him; the great voice of Mr. Hornbeam shouting his praises and the Borough Wall falling at the sound. He saw Anthony, exasperated but powerless; his life embittered; his labor thrown

away, struggling vainly to recover what he had lost. Then he saw himself, carrying his triumph still further; marrying some paragon of beauty, who, if not for love at any rate for money, would sit at his side when Mary's charms were on the wane, and snatch from her the remaining homage which her face might win even in her fallen fortunes. These pictures, elaborated with many a minute detail by Owen's imagination, produced a singular effect upon him. Step by step, scene by scene, he saw the gradual progress of a refined method of revenge, striking his rival in the tenderest places, giving back stripe for stripe, and ending in Anthony's entire humiliation. If Mr. Forrest had thwarted his love and lashed his flesh, he could thwart his ambition and lash his pride. If Mary had rejected him and scorned him, he could punish her and humble her. Every feeling of resentment, every accumulation of hatred, found its proper gratification; he was not troubled by scruples of conscience in the matter, and yet, after all, the result, instead of being satisfactory, was irritating and disappoint-

ing. For the last figure in each of his mental pictures was the figure of Mary, and everyone of them presented her with an averted face, abhorring him and avoiding him. He had seen her that morning, with neither abhorrence nor avoidance on her countenance. He had watched her for an hour or two, smiling, gracious, and winning; and though she had never smiled for him, or done him any act of grace, or spent a single thought on pleasing him, her image under this aspect was so much more agreeable to him than the form she took at the end of all his hostile plans, that, instead of pursuing these with any sort of contentment, he was slowly bending his thoughts to the discovery of some better climax, in which Mary's face might still retain the charm it had worn that day. No easy task, but that made no difference to Owen Williams. Length or intricacy left no impression upon him when he saw a track before him and believed the thing he wanted would be found at the other end. He was a huntsman who supposed that every fence could be got over or

broken through; a soldier who took for granted that no fortress was impregnable; a mechanician who never thought of asking whether a thing could be done, but only whether it was worth the doing.

He sat perfectly still through the early hours before daybreak, and when morning sounds began to follow the silence of the night he had not yet stirred a second time. The candles were nearly burnt away; the fire was out: the mice had crawled over his shoes and climbed the table. He was so thoroughly awake that he heard the little feet returning to their holes, and knew when the room was clear of them, but so totally absorbed in thought that, for any movement of his own except his breathing, there might have been a dead man in the room. So he sat till it was seven o'clock. When the clock had done striking he quietly drew his hands out of his pockets, rose, went to his dressing-table, washed and shaved as usual, walked down into the coffee-room and ordered breakfast.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WAVE AND THE ROCK.

WILLIAMS was a man who could sit up all night without dozing even, drink his coffee in the morning, and go to work as if he had slept from sunset to sunrise. He walked out of the hotel looking exactly as usual, and went straight to Mr. Hornbeam.

"Hornbeam," said he, "I have changed my mind."

"Well, what's it about, Mr. Williams?"

"I withdraw for the present from this contest. I am not known enough, and I am not sufficiently informed. The time's premature. What I saw yesterday has decided me."

Mr. Hornbeam looked aghast, for the new man was to be his great card.

"Mr. Williams, I beg your pardon, sir, but this announcement astonishes me. Our party consider you as pledged, sir; absolutely pledged."

"Your party must have patience. I owe them nothing and care for nobody. I've made my own position and shall act as I please in it. If they like to trust me, well and good; I may do them some service in my own way and at my own time. If not, why we part company and there's an end of it."

"Mr. Williams," cried Mr. Hornbeam, in a loud voice, "your conduct is unhandsome."

"There our opinions differ, Mr. Hornbeam."

"Mr. Williams, your behaviour is disgraceful."

"Then, sir, the less you or your party have to do with me the better."

"Mr. Williams, you are not a gentleman, sir."

"Good morning, sir," said Owen, and he went away.

He went away chuckling a little to himself. He thought Hornbeam would have been too shrewd to break with him in a huff immediately, and feeling pretty sure that he would

be sorry for it and anxious to make up the quarrel, he saw unexpected advantages in the situation. He returned to the market-place, but instead of going back to the hotel he crossed over to the other side, walked into the Bank, and asked for a private interview with Mr. Anthony Forrest. He was shown into the Bank parlor, where Anthony sat by the table, reading an account of the presentation in a local newspaper. The entrance of Williams surprised and rather embarrassed him. What could the man want? and how was he to treat him? He bowed formally, pointed to a chair, and waited for his visitor to break the ice.

Owen Williams had been his own master for about five years, and, during the greater part of that time, in the position of a highly successful man of business. He had had a fair English education, had studied science to the best of his opportunities, and latterly had moved among the higher ranks of commercial and professional life. His former habits as a workman and a natural want of grace, either physical or mental,

made anything like polish or refinement in his manners out of the question, but having sense enough to be aware of this, instead of making himself ridiculous by attempting an impossible transformation, he had quietly learnt such of the forms of society as were of every-day requirement, and for the rest, was content in manner, speech, and dress to pass for a plain man, raised from humble life by his own abilities, rather vulgar, but decidedly rich. Success had given him complete self-confidence, and his sense was great, his learning quite natural and unostentatious, and his real influence undoubted; he passed easily and on equal terms among those who, five years before, would have seen nothing in him but the attributes of a working-man.

He sat down composedly in the Bank parlor.

"Mr. Forrest," said he, "my name is Owen Williams."

Anthony made no observation.

"I have come to settle here. I have qualified as a freeman, and am named to start in opposition to you at the next municipal election."

"Sir," said Anthony, "you fail to interest me."

"We saw one another about five years ago, Mr. Forrest."

"Possibly," replied Anthony.

"I was working in the quarries, and you were courting. I insulted you, and you thrashed me."

"Under similar provocation I should instantly repeat the process," said Anthony, glancing at a large riding whip over the mantel-piece.

"After four years' marriage, Mr. Forrest, I need not say that what I told you at that time was a piece of unfounded scandal."

"What you told me, sir," said Anthony, "was an infamous lie."

"I shall not deny it. I was an angry man, and I made use of a shameful story told in the village. Five years have proved its falsehood, if that had been necessary, and have given me, I hope, a better temper. Rough lives give rough habits, Mr. Forrest. I was a quarryman then, and I behaved like one. My position is changed, and I

wish to make amends for the past. I have come to beg your pardon."

"That sir," replied Anthony, haughtily, "is another affair. I have no desire to recall the circumstances you refer to either for pardon or displeasure. You renew the insult by reminding me of it. Let the subject drop, if you please."

"I shall be glad to do so, Mr. Forrest. It was my place to make an apology and I have made it; that is all. Allow me now to speak of other matters."

Anthony bowed more civilly than before. He began by supposing that he should have to horsewhip Williams through the market-place, and was a little surprised and on the whole not displeased by the nature of their interview so far.

"We are both men of business, Mr. Forrest. I have come to live in Porchester, and you are aware that, as a matter of fact, having property, I shall have a certain influence in the town."

"I admit, sir, that it may be so."

"More or less it must be, Mr. Forrest. I state the fact; I make no boast of it. From the position you occupy already, it will follow that the part I take and the part you take will each have its effect upon the other; that is, whether we like it or not, we shall come in contact."

"That, Mr. Williams, is a matter of complete indifference to me."

"Mr. Forrest, I have been brought to Porchester through business acquaintance with Mr. Hornbeam. I heard Mr. Hornbeam's statement as to the politics of the place, and I agreed to join his party."

"You have made such a choice, sir, as was to be expected."

"The party wanted a new man to oppose you, Mr. Forrest. I consented to oppose you. I admit there was a satisfaction in it; my recollection of you was not friendly."

"To that extent, Mr. Williams, I can understand you perfectly; you had a spite against me,

and you took the first occasion to show it at the expense of the best interests of the place you were about to live in; you, a stranger and an upstart, were ready to lay the whole town by the ears, give its prosperity to the dogs and send its unanimity to the devil, for the sake of your own petty vengeance and insolent ambition. The act was admirable. Do your worst, sir, and succeed if you can."

A faint tinge of red came over Owen's face, but he showed no other sign of disturbance, and answered quietly:

"You are aware, sir, that voters are fickle, and that under the circumstances I have a fair chance of beating you?"

"If you wish to ascertain my opinion on the subject, Mr. Williams, you will be disappointed."

"I only point out the fact, Mr. Forrest, to show that, my feelings being such as you have described, the course I took was natural."

"The course you took, sir, was insolent, which, doubtless, means the same thing."

"I had a grudge against you, Mr. Forrest,

and the opportunity of revenging myself being offered, I took it, as you say."

"And you come here to tell me so!—you have the impertinence to bring your petty spite into my private presence?" said Anthony, glancing again at the riding-whip.

"I come here, Mr. Forrest, to say that I withdraw from this contest, and that you have only to walk over the course."

"Sir, I am at a loss to understand you."

"I withdraw from the contest, Mr. Forrest. I have just told Hornbeam that this is my decision, and quarrelled with him at his own door."

"Are you serious, Mr. Williams?"

"Most decidedly."

"What on earth, sir, can this strange communication mean?"

"Mr. Forrest, I went yesterday to the meeting at the Borough Wall; I saw you and Mrs. Forrest there. Letting bygones be bygones, we may say, I saw you for the first time. I heard what you and your friends had to say, and I

made my own observations. My conclusion was that the course I had taken was a wrong one. I saw, sir, that, as you have remarked, I was going to set the town by the ears for the sake, after all, of a petty vengeance. I saw that the good of helping Mr. Hornbeam and his party into power might anyhow be doubted. Not to refer again more particularly to former events, I must still say I felt that, in point of fact, I owed you an apology, and to Mrs. Forrest something more. That apology, sir, has been made. What I offer to Mrs. Forrest is my entire withdrawal from this contest, which, as a matter of course, is an annoyance to her."

Anthony rose from his chair.

"Mr. Williams, I have misunderstood you; your behaviour is that of a Christian and a gentleman. For my own conduct this morning I sincerely beg your pardon, and request you to forget it. Let us shake hands."

They did so—Williams saying nothing; Anthony, who besides the gratification of his personal feelings, saw himself suddenly relieved from the

greatest danger that had ever threatened his political power, repeating in warm and chivalrous terms his regret for his former misconception of Owen's character.

"I hope we understand each other," said he. "As to the past, Mr. Williams, its aspect is changed. I perceive that we may both have been to blame; at any rate, that my violence, though apparently justified, may in reality have been inconsiderate. I have received your apology; I offer my own. Let us never allude again to that subject. Let our acquaintance and mutual recognition date from this morning."

"From yesterday, if you please," replied Williams, "since it was your eloquence, sir, and Mrs. Forrest's dignity that showed me the true state of affairs between us, and led to this agreeable explanation."

"You flatter us, Mr. Williams. Let it be, then, from yesterday. In the meantime, we must improve this acquaintance, and I must introduce you to Mrs. Forrest. May I hope to find you a complete convert from Mr. Horn-

beam's party and a leading member of what I may call my own?"

"At present, Mr. Forrest, I intend to be neutral. Having disappointed Mr. Hornbeam, and, probably, spoilt his game for this year, I should feel a delicacy in going further. I shall be in bad repute, also, for some time, as a coward or a turncoat, and should like to keep quiet till it is blown over. Into the bargain, I know very little about the town, and should wish for fuller information before I come out again as a party man."

"I respect those feelings, Mr. Williams. Pray, come and dine with me this afternoon. You shall make the acquaintance of some of our leading men, and have an opportunity of contrasting the rival interests of our vigorous old town."

Owen accepted the invitation, and they parted.

Anthony was made to succeed in most things, but he was totally destitute of one quality to which many men owe the whole of their success. He was clear-headed, acute, observant, but he had not one particle of cunning. He could see

as far as any one along the straight high roads of human motive, but its by-paths, its fox-holes, its serpent-tracks, were generally out of his line of vision. He had his plots as a hunter has his snares; they were plain pitfalls for the nobler game, not poisoned honey for things malignant or obscene. He kept his guard like a sentinel, with open eyes and arms in his hand; but his watch was against the sudden dash of an enemy, not the stolen password of a traitor. A suspicious temper might have doubted the sincerity of Williams, and ascribed his sudden change of conduct, immediately after the presentation meeting, to a conviction on his part that he had mistaken his own interest, that Hornbeam's party was neither the most powerful nor the most respectable, and that the best thing he could do, as a new inhabitant of the town, was to go over at once to the Porticites before he had committed himself further. The same spirit of doubt might have questioned the policy of bringing Mary and her old lover together again; but Williams and Anthony must

have exchanged places or characters before such questions could arise.

"Mary," cried Mr. Forrest, when he met his wife an hour afterwards, "congratulate me! The Club has conquered already. There's an end to the battle for this year."

Mary had been to look after her friend Lucy, on whose arm the leeches had done their duty, as Mr. Hobbes had feared, and who, between the bruise and the reptiles, was laid up altogether for the present.

"How have you done it?" she asked, gaily. "Has the Bridge Hill levelled itself? or has Martin Dove tumbled over Mr. Hornbeam?"

"The Bridge Hill and Mr. Hornbeam are both in their usual state of preservation, but Owen Williams has joined our side."

"Joined our side! How extraordinary!"

"Perhaps I go too far in saying so, but at any rate he has left the other, and Hornbeam's plan for the election is blown up at once. I have had a remarkable interview with Williams. We have quite misunderstood his character,

Mary. He is a noble fellow under a rough exterior."

"Owen Williams a noble fellow!"

"Unquestionably. He was present at the meeting yesterday, and was evidently convinced by what he heard there. He has withdrawn from the contest, quarrelled with Hornbeam, offered the most manly apology to me individually and to yourself also for any former impropriety, and, in fact, gained my esteem at once and made me desire his friendship."

"It is very strange indeed!"

"It is so; but he is a remarkable character."

"Are you sure he is not deceiving you?"

"It would be ungenerous to think so when he has given the best proof of his sincerity by giving up this contest unasked. He would have beaten me, Mary, in the present temper of the town, and we both knew it."

"It would be ungenerous, certainly," said Mary, thoughtfully. "Wherever did he get his money?"

"I have heard all about that. He is the

patentee of a discovery which has proved a rapid fortune. I have invited him to dine with us to-day."

Mary started. "To dine with us, dearest?"

"Yes, my love. If I am not mistaken, his friendship will be worth having. We must do our best to enlist him heartily on the right side."

Mary found the idea of being on friendly terms with Owen Williams a highly disagreeable one, but it was only the day before that Anthony had granted her heart's desire with regard to Lucy, at the sacrifice of his own intentions, and she was too happy and too much gratified to let her private antipathy interfere with her husband's wish in the present case. She promised to receive Owen graciously, and to treat him with sufficient attention; and ran away to give her orders in the kitchen.

CHAPTER V.

A CLUB DINNER.

THERE was great consternation among the Porcites when the defection of the new man was made known. Bad names were heaped upon him with liberality. Hornbeam and his coadjutors grew hot and reviled one another; after which they grew cool again, and looking at the matter like men of business, decided that the game was certainly up for that year, but that instead of breaking suddenly with Williams they must treat him tenderly, do their utmost to keep him from going finally into the enemy's camp, and postpone their further plans for a twelvemonth.

Williams dined at the Bank that day with a party of Porticites. He was, as he intended to be, the last arrival. When he came into the room, the two Miss Cloudesleys, Mrs. Beaumont

and old Mrs. Forrest were sitting near the window. Mr. Forrest the elder, suffering from the effects of gout, lay with his foot upon the sofa, and Anthony, Mr. Cloudesley, Mr. Beaumont, Mr. Hobbes and Mr. Cane, the druggist, stood about the room, Mary shaking hands with Mr. Hobbes, who had just entered.

"Rather better, my dear madam, rather better; but I fear the leeches were voracious," Mr. Hobbes was saying. Mary, seeing Williams in the doorway, blushed uncontrollably and turned her head away; but, vexed with herself and afraid of annoying her husband, she stepped forward immediately and met the newly arrived guest half-way. The consequence was that no one except Williams saw the color in her cheeks, but that he saw it at its highest. Conscious of this, and still more vexed about it, but resolved to carry it off bravely, she held her hand out and said, half-laughing—

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Williams; you are not among yesterday's killed and wounded, it seems."

"No, madam; I am among the prisoners," said Williams, bowing gravely over her hand.

"Then," said Mr. Hobbes, who had followed Mary behind, "we are the captors of an entire army, for Mr. Williams is a host in himself; ha! ha! Let me congratulate you on your captivity, my dear sir; you shall find us neither Goths nor Anakim; our gates and guards are good-fellowship and smiling ladies."

"I hope we shall be better acquainted, sir," said Owen.

"You are very welcome, Mr. Williams," said Anthony, taking him by the arm. "You see before you the Borough Wall Club and its fair patronesses."

"I am proud of the opportunity," replied Williams, bowing to the ladies first, and then to the gentlemen. The two Miss Cloudesleys laid their heads together in the window with smothered smiles.

"What a bow, Leonora!"

"Has he any joints, my dear?"

"Yes; one in the waist."

"I want to prick him, Charlotte."

"Hold your tongue."

"To see if he's hard."

"Be quiet, Leonora."

"It's all wood under his clothes."

"Nonsense; he's very rich."

"If he speaks to me, I shall scream."

"For shame, Leonora; he's a bachelor."

"Oh, goodness! make him another courtesy, my dear."

"A remarkable man," said old Mrs. Forrest to young Mrs. Beaumont. "My son admires him. There must be something extraordinary about him to please my son."

"Vulgar, but likely to succeed," thought Mr. Cloudesley.

"An awkward customer for an enemy; a confounded deep one for a friend," was the internal conclusion of Mr. Beaumont, the lawyer.

"Queer!" thought Mr. Forrest, senior, on the sofa; "what sort of fish has Anthony been hooking? Plague on the gout! The boy is left too much to himself," and he moved his foot

impatiently, while modest Mr. Cane, the druggist, addressed the new comer in a deferential tone on the subject of the weather.

At the dinner-table, nevertheless, Mr. Williams rose a good deal in the opinion of his disparagers. He was quite at his ease; was neither a glutton nor a wine-bibber; and though quite destitute of wit, seldom smiling, and totally unprovided with small-talk, he had a good deal to say of a practical kind, and his remarks were interesting. The Club being in the highest spirits, there was great fun round the table, and without being funny himself Williams helped it by the information he gave on various subjects, for every fact suggested a simile and every simile a joke. Various anecdotes were told, and among them, for Owen's benefit, the famous one about Mr. Fowkes and the ammonite.

"That fossil, sir," said Daniel Hobbes, "in which without vanity I may say the fate of Porchester lay embedded, that predestinated fossil, sir, was found in the very quarry you are working to such admiration. I picked it up myself

in the Devil's Hollow. You know the Devil's Hollow, Mr. Williams? When I was a boy, a long time ago—unfortunately, a long time ago—it was Parson's Hollow; quite another name, you see, though closely connected."

"Oh, oh!" cried old Mr. Forrest; "I 'll report you at church, Hobbes."

"Closely connected, my good sir. The bane and the remedy, the poison and the antidote, the coming wolf and the dogs to bid him go."

"And keep him going," suggested the lawyer.

"One profession at a time, my dear sir; we were speaking of parsons. Let everybody have his due, and when we come to the law ——"

"We go to the dogs," said Mr. Cloudesley.

"To wit, the parsons, then, as Hobbes hath demonstrated," said Beaumont.

"The sooner the better, for a burial service. Get me to go to law and hang me at once," said Mr. Cloudesley.

"Which is as much as saying you'll be hanged if you do," replied the lawyer.

"Gentlemen," said Hobbes, "we have wandered.

"Like lost sheep," said Beaumont.

"Or scared chickens," suggested Mr. Cloudesley.

"Oh! oh!" cried Mr. Forrest the elder, again, "do you liken the Club to chickens? I repudiate the soft impeachment."

"Mr. Forrest is no chicken, certainly," said his wife.

"I should think not, ma'am, nor Mr. Cloudesley either. Gout and daughters, sir—gout and daughters."

"Two necessary evils," said Mr. Cloudesley, while Leonora held up her hands, and her sister laughed and pouted.

"Again I do protest we have wandered, ladies and gentlemen," cried Hobbes, who had a story to tell.

"How can you wonder, sir, when you set upon us with both the parsons and the devil?" said Beaumont, in a tone of mock expostulation. There was a loud fit of laughter at this, joined in by Mr. Williams himself.

"Now, my friends," said Daniel Hobbes, "having had our laugh out——"

"Oh, don't flatter yourself, Hobbes," said the lawyer, "my laugh was only experimental."

"I have ten fits louder than the last, at the bottom of my larynx," added Mr. Cloudesley.

"And the ladies look wicked," said Beaumont.

"I can't laugh any more," cried Mary, wiping her eyes.

"Yes, you can," said Mr. Beaumont. "Mr. Hobbes has got an original story ready—never heard of before by anybody; begins with a little speech: 'Ladies and gentlemen, when the ancestors of Mr. Hornbeam and his party were eating acorns in the neighbouring forest ——'"

This was irresistible, and everybody roared again.

"Leave the pigs alone, Beaumont," said Anthony, "you drag them in by the tails."

"For the sake of peace and quietness," replied the lawyer.

"My story," said Hobbes, "has nothing whatever to do with either pigs or Porcites; nothing whatever, upon my honor, but a great deal

with tails. Let us go back to Parson's Hollow, my dear ladies."

"Oh, the devil!" muttered Beaumont, with a wink, unable to resist the joke.

"Order, order! Ladies, lend us your frowns," cried Mr. Cloudesley.

"Parson's Hollow was the name when I was a boy," continued Hobbes. "You must know my dear ladies that in the time of the civil wars a clergyman was killed and buried there—a most authentic story—in my weekly researches among the town records I came upon a contemporary account of the occurrence; very curious indeed, Mr. Forrest, and undoubtedly original." (Ever since the great Porticite victory, Hobbes had regularly devoted one morning a week to an examination of the said records, in a persevering though hitherto fruitless search after the document wherein the name of Porchester was reported to have been seen with the spelling Porticeaster.) "Well, the quarry was first opened there, and the workmen didn't half like it; a natural superstition, very common among the laboring classes.

One day, before they had got very deep, I was there looking out for fossils. There was an Irishman, a new hand, working away pretty near me. All at once he stops of a sudden.

"'Bedad,' says he, 'I've found him.'

"'Who have you found?' says I.

"'His riverence,' says he.

"'Whose reverence?' says I.

"'The parson,' says he.

"'What parson?' says I.

"'His bones,' says he; 'bedad, they've picked 'em clane.'

"'What are you talking of?' says I.

"'Save us!' says he, 'the coffin's gone entirely.'

"I 'd got up to him then, and saw the middle of an ichthyosaurus in the rock he 'd been hammering at.

"'Gracious,' says I, 'why, Paddy, you're right about the bones. Go on, my lad,' says I; 'we'll have his tail out in five minutes.'

"'Is it tails, your honor?' says he. He looked as grave as a ghost.

"'One of them,' says I. 'Hammer away, my boy, it's just behind there.'

"'Oh, thin divil take the tail,' says Paddy, 'for it's Satan himself,' and off he went at a scamper. Named the place, though: it's been Devil's Hollow ever since."

"I know the spot," said Williams. "The best of all the stone is there, but nobody seemed to know it, and it hasn't been worked for years. I've had a bother about it already; couldn't get the men to set at it with half a will. They knew your story, sir, or something like it, and thought the old gentleman was in the hollow: I soon got rid of him however."

"With holy water?" said Mr. Cloudesley.

"No, sir, without it. I privately dropped a couple of sovereigns down the first bore they made, before the powder was put in. When the blast was fired, the gold dropped out, and the men found it lying among the stone. There's been no more trouble, they fancy there's some treasure buried there, and work away from morning till night, expecting to find it."

"For once, then, gold has delivered us from the Prince of Darkness," said Anthony. "You have turned the tables upon him, sir: the bargain is generally the other way."

"A frank confession for a banker," said Beaumont; but the ladies left them at this moment, and politics became the order of the day. The club, elated and incautious, revealed most of its party secrets to Owen's observant ears, rather to the chagrin of the elder Mr. Forrest, who, though not one of its members at the beginning, had become so afterwards, and who, feeling no instinctive confidence in Williams, tried by ineffectual signs to put the others on their guard. Williams himself, however, without appearing to betray any confidence, gave some valuable hints regarding Mr. Hornbeam's plans and policy, and so behaved himself that he seemed to be almost a member of the club, while at the same time he declined to take any definite part in its proceedings, or, indeed, to declare himself a partizan on either side for the present. Mr. Hornbeam had taken him to his bosom, and disclosed

everything relating to Porcite interests, and before dinner was over, he was almost equally well-informed in the opposite direction.

Master Tony was in the drawing-room when the gentlemen returned there. He had climbed a chair behind Leonora, and was pulling her hair. Seeing a ribbon in it, he pulled that also, and a sudden catastrophe was the result; this ribbon happened to be the corner-stone of an elaborate system of head-gear, and the whole fabric fell at once in ruin about her shoulders when it was removed. The girls had been petting and exciting the child, and Mary had been for some time in a fidget to get him back to the nursery; her attempts, however, being defeated by the entreaties of the ladies, who had never had enough of the beautiful boy, and thought perhaps more of their own amusement than of Mary's. The gentlemen, in jovial mood, began to laugh as they entered. Leonora, dishevelled and all confusion, ran like a goose behind one of the window curtains. Master Tony, screaming with delight, ran after her, seized the curtain, twisted

himself into it, and tumbled down. The rod gave way overhead; the damask fell to the ground, smashing a china vase on a side table, and unveiled Leonora; the child, too excited to know what he was about, shouted louder than before, wriggled out of the fallen curtain, caught hold of the next one, and began tugging at it as hard as he could, in the hope, probably, of bringing about a smash universal.

"How, sir! what is this, sir?" said Anthony, walking across the room, before Mary, who had caught her dress against the furniture, had time to interfere. "You seem bent on mischief, sir; we shall stop this if you please," and he laid hold of the child's shoulder.

"No, me won't; no, me won't. Me pull it all down, me bury Miss Nora."

"You shall beg Miss Leonora's pardon, sir, and your mamma's also. Let go this instant."

"Me pull her hair; me bury her. You come down! You come down!" and the little fellow jumped and tugged with all his might. Anthony snatched the curtain out of his hands and tried to

hold him. The boy, as usual, flung himself on his back, and kicked like a centipede. Anthony caught him by a leg and an arm, and without regarding Mary's hastily whispered, "Oh, don't, dear!" carried him squealing out of the room. Mary followed to the door; stopped there, as pale as ivory, and half turned back as if she thought she ought not to leave her guests. She did leave them, however, shutting the door quickly behind her. She returned in a few minutes, with Anthony, both looking rather flushed, and the servants were called to clear away the wreck; Leonora, in the meantime, having rebuilt her edifice in another room.

"A fine spirit, that," said Mr. Cloudesley. "You've got your work before you, Forrest."

"The boy requires a firm hand," replied Anthony. "He is born to be a great character, but weak authority would ruin him. I beg pardon, ladies, in my son's name, for this disturbance."

Most of the party protested they had been mightily amused, but Anthony had spoken in rather a severe tone, and a very close observer

might have seen that Mary had enough to do to keep herself from crying. Owen Williams did see it. He saw also that Mary from time to time turned uneasily towards the door; and that once when it was open, and a very faint sound like wailing at a distance could just be distinguished, the company being all well occupied at the time, she slipped quietly away and was absent for a quarter of an hour.

"Mary Forrest is a tigress over her boy, and the child is not exactly an olive branch," was Mr. Williams's reflection, and when he made it he smiled a little.

CHAPTER VI.

BOUGHT AND SOLD.

Owen Williams congratulated himself on the result of his policy. He had got into the confidence of both parties without being committed to either, and had a friendly footing at the Bank, where Mary received him graciously, to please her husband, and Anthony, in a spirit of generosity as well as for political ends, treated him with great attention. The fact of his having dined with the Borough Wall Club alarmed the Porcites, and brought Mr. Hornbeam to him next day with an apology for his hasty behaviour. "Say no more about it, Hornbeam," said Williams. "A huff's a huff, and a man can't always keep his temper. I'm no party man yet. Let me know how you get on, and wait

a little." Whereupon Mr. Hornbeam was delighted, and reported Williams to the secret committee as certainly on the right side in his heart. Owen had been present formerly at one or two of the committee's meetings, and had made acquaintance with Mr. Fowkes on those occasions. Mr. Fowkes was generally a very safe man with regard to secrets, but he had nevertheless dropped some observations out of which Owen drew the inference that he knew something of a private nature relating to Mr. Forrest's history. This idea was confirmed by a subsequent conversation with Mr. Fowkes, who was proof, however, against all leading questions on the subject. Mr. Williams thought the matter over; became convinced that it might answer his purpose to relieve the landlord's breast of its hidden burden, and immediately set to work upon it, with his usual decision.

"Fowkes," said he, addressing that gentleman one September morning as he stood moodily in the road before the old way-side inn; "Fowkes, I have become your landlord. I have bought the Four All's."

"The devil, you have!" exclaimed Mr. Fowkes, startled out of all propriety by this unexpected bit of news.

"I see your lease expires next year, Fowkes. It strikes me that in renewing it the rent should be raised, and I think of doubling it."

"The devil, you do!" cried the landlord in still greater consternation, jerking his right hand from his pocket, and applying it to his temple.

"You see, Fowkes, the state of things is rather changed. Forrest and his party have had a narrow escape this year. I can upset them whenever I please, and the value of this property will rise cent. per cent. the day of their downfall. If you don't like to give the rent, I can take the place off your hands."

"Good Lord deliver us!" exclaimed Mr. Fowkes, staring into vacancy, while he jerked out the other hand and took a pinch of snuff from his waistcoat.

"You seem a little disturbed, Fowkes. You look uneasy."

"I should say so," replied the landlord.

"You are surprised, I see."

"Doubling it!" said Fowkes.

"Satisfied with present terms, eh?"

"Cent per cent!" said Fowkes.

"Is the back parlor empty, Mr. Fowkes?"

"Lord bless my soul!" said the landlord.

"I want some words with you in private," said Williams. "If Mrs. Fowkes is out of the road, we may as well sit down."

The landlord sighed heavily; withdrew his eyes from the distant horizon; suffered his hands to subside into his pockets again, and turned himself towards the open door of the inn, through which the sound of scouring was heard.

"Polly, where's the missis?"

"T 'other side the field, wi' Bob Dickson."

"What's she doing?"

"Pitching into him."

"What's he been up to?"

"Prigging chips."

"She's cotched him then, has she?"

"Ay, she's cotched him."

"She'll give him half an hour of it," said

Fowkes to Mr. Williams, and he led the way to the little back parlor, where Adam and Eve still stood on the mantel-piece, exactly as Martin Dove had found them; except that Mrs. Fowkes, in one of her tantrums, had made a breach in the tree of knowledge and broken the serpent's head.

"Fowkes," said Owen, "I'll be plain with you. I intend to be master in Porchester; but I've got my own plans, and I shall carry them out in my own way. At present I belong to no party. My time is not come yet. Now I want a confidential agent to keep watch for me in certain matters; to have his eyes open and say nothing except as I desire it. Do you understand?"

"Spy?" said the landlord.

"Just so. Now you're the right man if you like to take the place."

"I should say so."

"Supposing, of course, that I made it worth your while."

"That's it," said Fowkes, brightening up a

little, for he began to understand his position, and the state of his affairs as the tenant of Mr. Williams appeared less threatening than before.

"That's it," said Owen. "I don't want to cheat anybody. Give me value, and there's your money. The Four All's is a poor concern, Fowkes, whatever it may be hereafter. I know that very well. It's as much as ever you can do to make both ends meet here, and you've half a mind to hang yourself every quarter. You shall be easier for the future. Do as I tell you, and you shall live rent-free from to-day."

"Blessed if I don't then!" said Fowkes, slapping his knee. "Mr. Williams, I beg your pardon, sir; thought you'd done for me: but it's different."

"It's a bargain then," said Williams. "Now, in the first place, of course this is a perfect secret between us."

"As close as a flint," said Fowkes.

"In the next place, Fowkes, your quarter's nearly due. There's the money for it. I'm in

earnest, you see. Now you know something about Mr. Forrest that has to do with the old Chancery House on Chosen Forest. Let me hear what it is."

The landlord looked hard at the money, then at the giver, and then at the cash again.

"You're pretty sharp, Mr. Williams."

"Just so," said Owen.

Now the state of Mr. Fowkes' mind was for the moment one of perplexity, for he seemed to find himself suddenly called upon to weigh two different interests against each other, and decide between them on the spot.

Mrs. Fraser, through all these years, had retained possession of the Chancery House, as it was called, among the larch-covered hills on Chosen Forest, and after a long absence on the Continent had at last returned to it. She had kept up a secret correspondence with Fowkes, who, in consideration of an annual stipend of twenty pounds, paid privately, had zealously collected information for her regarding the lives and fortunes of Mary and her husband. Neither

the stipend nor the occupation were to be suspended in consequence of her return to the neighbourhood, and when Owen Williams proposed to employ him in the very same capacity, Mr. Fowkes' first impression was that two engagements of the kind must naturally be incompatible, and that the acceptance of the one involved, therefore, the relinquishment of the other. Owen's offer was the better of the two, but then his stedfastness had not been tested, while that of Mrs. Fraser had already endured for years. Moreover, Mrs. Fraser had no lack of money bags, and might raise her terms in a case of competition. Second thoughts, however, advised Mr. Fowkes that he was on the wrong tack altogether; that instead of bothering himself with their comparative weights, there was no reason why he should not put both interests into the same scale together; that in point of fact he was in the advantageous position of being able to sell the same goods twice over, nothing more being required of him but a little extra caution in the business. He had by degrees become

acquainted with most of the facts relating to the connection between Anthony and Mrs. Fraser, partly from Mrs. Fraser's own statements, and partly from communications which had passed from time to time between Fowkes himself and the parties who had been his fellow servants while he was butler in the family of Mrs. Fraser's father. These facts were a profound secret in Porchester. Anthony's courtship in Sussex had been a short one, and the way in which it ended was not such as to make him desirous of confessing it publicly. Mrs. Fraser's marriage at Gretna Green was duly noticed in the papers of the day, but Anthony's name had not been introduced into the narrative. A rumor indeed had spread abroad that he had been jilted somewhere; but the rumor was met by silence, and led to no discoveries, and the whole truth was known to no one but himself and his parents. He had not even thought it necessary to make any statement of the circumstance to Mary, for while he had no manner of doubt but that to withhold an important secret from her husband

was flat infidelity on the part of any wedded wife, his views on the subject of conjugal confidence left a large discretion to his own sex.

Williams listened attentively to the narrative of Mr. Fowkes, and before they parted, the details of an arrangement were settled between them, whereby the landlord, through the credit he possessed with Mrs. Fraser on the one hand and Mr. Hornbeam on the other, undertook to keep his patron well informed concerning the private affairs both of Anthony and his enemies.

CHAPTER VII.

CHOSEN FOREST.

There was a ruddy light under the trees and on the hill-sides of Chosen Forest; for though the sky was gray, the red brake gave its color to the autumnal landscape, glowing here and there like the outbursts of subterranean fires. The old brick Chancery House among its larch woods was as a red stone set in delicate light gold. Along the course of the stream that ran by it down the glen, a few beech-trees were dropping their flaming leaves into the water, and the ripples under them, where their images lay reflected, were tinged as if the sun was setting. Owen Williams entered the glen on foot. There were two roads up it, diverging from a bridge over the stream, and he took the most solitary. It

led to the house, along the hill-sides, through the larch woods, a distance of half a mile. Mr. Williams strode along, over green moss and colored fungus and the yellow dust of the larch leaves, bestowing very little attention on the scenery, but stopping a moment now and then to examine the rocks. At a short distance from the house, which stood at the upper end of the glen, where the stream came down in a cascade behind it, Mrs. Fraser, with an easel before her, sat sketching one of the fiery beeches. The lapse of time had produced no particular change in her appearance, except that a more settled melancholy and a temper more subdued than formerly seemed to be indicated by the lines about her dark eyebrows. She had saved her property from the designs of her husband's bad associates, and lived abroad from the year of Anthony's marriage till that of Owen's settlement in Porchester. Her life during that time had been spent in unavailing regret and uncontrolled longing after a happiness which, if she could once have felt it to be unattainable, might gradually

have faded from her thoughts, but which, unfortunately, was kept by certain circumstances always before her as one of the vague yet golden possibilities of future years. She had never persuaded herself that Anthony's marriage with a peasant girl could prove anything but a mistake in the long run, or that his old attachment to herself could be entirely obliterated. She felt always as if it was Mary alone who prevented their re-union, and with her own experience of the sudden manner in which life's uncertainty may straighten the most entangled way, it was not likely she could forget that Mary was a mortal woman, and Anthony her lawful husband only during her life-time. However dim this thought might otherwise have been, it was put into a tangible form by one or two incidents. Mary was dangerously ill when her child was born. A year afterwards she was thrown from her carriage and narrowly escaped being killed upon the spot. Still later she caught a fever raging in the neighbourhood, and for a month her life had been despaired of. Mrs. Fraser

heard of all these events through her faithful correspondent, Mr. Fowkes. She heard also from time to time of reported differences between Mr. and Mrs. Forrest. Mary's early indiscretion, with its effects at her husband's first election, took the wings of rumor and spread itself abroad. The want of harmony between them in the bringing up of the child was spoken of, and it was said that Mary had been many times in tears while arguing with her husband's mother on the subject of nursing. The permanent idea produced in Mrs. Fraser's mind was simply this: "If that girl were to die, Anthony would be free again, and might be glad to be so."

She returned at last to England, bringing with her an Italian maid as a companion, and took up her abode again at the Chancery House, unnoticed, and desiring to remain so. She had a talent for painting, and spent much of her time upon it. The remainder was chiefly occupied by gossip with her maid and the little farmers who kept the house for her, or in solitary and secret rambles, in which she sometimes caught a glimpse

of Anthony, or heard him speak in public without being observed, or took note for herself of such things concerning him as happened to fall in her way. She dressed meanly, that no one might notice her; wore a veil to conceal her beauty; and gave out, as before, that she was an invalid, staying for a short time only on Chosen Forest.

She looked up from her easel as Owen approached. He stopped within a yard or two of her.

"I think, ma'am, you are Mrs. Fraser."

"You are right."

"My name will not be known to you, but it is Williams—Owen Williams. I should be glad to have some private conversation with you."

"I have no wish for society. Unless you have business to speak of, I would rather not hear it."

"I have important business to speak of."

"Then we are quite alone here; you may tell it at once."

"I shall have to surprise you, Mrs. Fraser. I am acquainted with your history. I know the

facts of your former engagement to Mr. Anthony Forrest, and of your continued attachment to him."

Mrs. Fraser started from her seat in consternation and astonishment.

"Sir, you do indeed surprise me. I am afraid you mean to insult me also?"

"Decidedly not, ma'am. My intentions are altogether of a friendly nature. I speak plainly to save time, and put us on a right footing to begin with."

"What can you have to say?"

"I myself, ma'am, am on friendly terms with Mr. Forrest. Possibly I owe to him the fortune which it is my privilege to enjoy. It is quite certain that some years ago he saved me from the pursuit of an improvident marriage, which might have changed the whole nature of my prospects. I don't forget my debt to him: my desire is to repay it. My object in addressing myself to you is to engage your good services in the matter."

"Sir, I have no communication with Mr. Anthony Forrest."

"Exactly, ma'am; I am aware of it. There have been quarrels, and there has been separation, but your sentiments being still those of friendship and interest, I have supposed, ma'am, that the renewal of communications might not be disagreeable to you."

"Supposing that to be the fact, what then?"

"Mr. Forrest, ma'am, is surrounded by dangers public as well as private. I speak at present of those of a public character. He has been long the head of his native town, but his position is seriously threatened both by open opposition and secret treason. My own position is peculiar, and one which I am not able fully to explain. I can, however, give Mr. Forrest important information on matters deeply interesting to him, while at the same time it is indispensable that he should receive it through some channel in which my agency shall not be even suspected. The sum of the matter is this; I want to find an individual like yourself, who can in this private manner convey intelligence which I shall supply. If you think well to take so much trouble on my account,

I can, in return, give you the opportunity of being serviceable to Mr. Forrest and of receiving occasional visits from him; both of which, I conclude, must be more or less pleasant to yourself."

Mrs. Fraser was standing before him like an Indian bird before a rattlesnake. The first effect of his abrupt announcement that her history was known to him had been to startle her with sudden terror, but every word he spoke afterwards, without removing her fear, helped to bind her with an irresistible fascination. She was living, consciously or unconsciously, in the daily hope of some such opportunity as Williams offered; of some fortunate chance by which herself and Anthony might be brought together again, if only at intervals, or if as nothing more than common acquaintances. To have such an opportunity before her, and to use it in the character of Anthony's benefactress in affairs of so much consequence as those affecting his public life and station, was to be happy beyond her hopes, and there was no concealing this fact from the eyes of Owen. To assume some measure of

indifference, she picked up her brush and sat down again before the easel.

"I have no wish to deny," she said, "that I should be happy to serve Mr. Forrest if I could do so without indiscretion."

She tried to add some touches to her picture, but her hand quivered like those living flames of which the beech-tree was after all only the motionless emblem.

"I see, ma'am," said Williams, "that we shall understand each other. One or two precautions have to be observed. I shall of course hold in honorable silence those disclosures which have been made to me respecting yourself and your objects"—Mrs. Fraser started again—"and on the other hand, your acquaintance with me will be kept a profound secret from Mr. Forrest. I shall have to see you occasionally, but if by chance these meetings should be noticed, my purpose in coming here is to examine the rocks, and my conversation with you consists of inquiries concerning them. I shall make such inquiries as a matter of fact, and for business objects. Do we agree together in this arrangement?"

Mrs. Fraser felt herself falling into his power, and the impulse of the moment was to make resistance.

"I have no objection," she said, haughtily, "to deliver any message you may wish me to carry to Mr. Anthony Forrest for his personal advantage, but I see no necessity for what you call an arrangement between us: we are strangers."

Williams smiled slightly as he answered—

"My plans," said he, "for Mr. Forrest's advantage will not be accomplished by a single message, and I suppose one interview with that gentleman would not satisfy your feelings of friendship and interest in him. The arrangement I spoke of is necessary to the success of my exertions in his behalf—unless, indeed, you prefer to decline the office altogether. In that case, I shall have only to change my plan."

His hand seemed to be closing on her, but she made one more faltering effort.

"Why did you choose me for your assistant if you could do the same thing in other ways?" she asked.

"Because the perfect knowledge I possessed as to your history and intentions made me certain that you would adopt my views immediately," he answered.

Mrs. Fraser colored. There could be no doubt as to the reality of Owen's knowledge, and not much as to the risks she must run in putting herself into his hands. But the temptation was too great; at least she had long been too reckless to give up what it promised her for any consideration of prudence. She was frightened, but what did that signify? Anthony would owe her something, and would see her again.

"You are," said she, "I suppose, the Mr. Williams who has bought the stone quarry, and who withdrew from the election?"

"The same, ma'am."

"I was of course taken unawares. You could hardly expect me to trust a stranger in so delicate a matter without consideration."

"It might be dangerous," said Williams.

"I feel less scruple about it, knowing who you are. You are spoken of with great respect."

Mr. Williams bowed, and waited.

"I agree therefore to your proposal, sir. Give me the means of doing some service to Mr. Forrest and you may reckon upon my secrecy. After all I may have to account for my information: what must I say?"

"You may say that it comes through Mr. Fowkes of the Four All's, which is perfectly true concerning much that I shall have to communicate. If necessary, you may add that he was butler in your father's family, and that he is under money obligations to you."

Mrs. Fraser turned pale at the mention of the landlord's name.

"Do you know Richard Fowkes?" she asked quickly.

"He is my tenant, ma'am."

This piece of news was anything but satisfactory to Mrs. Fraser. She looked alarmed and uneasy. Williams understood her look, and answered it.—

"It's true," said he, "that I have it in my power, Mrs. Fraser, to frustrate all your private designs by a few words in Mr. Forrest's ear, but

if you feel a doubt about my dealing honorably with you, I may observe to you that my own interest is the same as yours so long as we work together. My present object, you remember, is to put you and Mr. Forrest, privately, on speaking terms again, and to tell your secrets would be to make this out of the question for the rest of your lives."

"You are threatening me, Mr. Williams."

"No, ma'am; I am not threatening: but you may as well have two strings to your bow."

He had got two to his own, at all events. Mrs. Fraser's compliance with his wishes was certain, for she was drawn to it by both hope and fear. She trembled, but she agreed: the peril was incurred already, and she would at least taste the pleasure whose price it was.

"Mr. Forrest must receive my intelligence by instalments," said Williams. "Let us settle about your first interview with him. Afterwards, I shall be glad to know whether there is any granite in this direction."

When the matter was settled, Williams took his leave.

"Mr. Forrest," said he, "will come here once, Mrs. Fraser, I venture to promise; whether he comes again may depend on the way you deal with him. I'm no judge of ladies' conduct, but, as a practical man, I should say, behave quietly."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WATERFALL.

The purchase of the Four All's by Owen Williams was a stroke of policy which did him infinite credit, for it was looked upon by both parties in the Borough as a silent pledge of his adherence to their respective causes. Mr. Hornbeam nodded; said it was a good bargain; predicted that in another twelve months his words would be remembered; understood a little why Mr. Williams had kept out of politics for a while; he was deep, sir, deep; it wasn't a bad joke to buy property first, while it was cheap, and then double its value by turning King Forrest out of his place.

"The house was to be had cheap," said Williams, carelessly, to the Borough Wall Club. "The rent gives good interest, and Fowkes pays

the rent. Fowkes is very thick with his party, and I thought it might pay some day to have a hold on him."

"Williams is a long-headed man," said Anthony, to his father, in the Bank parlor. "I wonder none of us thought of buying the Four All's; as well," he added, with a smile, "as the High Street property."

"Ah!" said the old gentleman, looking into the fire, "a long-headed man; a little too long perhaps. Keep your eyes open, my boy, or he'll get over you one way or another."

"You are unjust, father, both to me and my friend."

"Great pity, sir."

"Your dislike to Williams is always apparent to me. Why do you dislike him?"

"Can't say. Have I heard you call him your friend before?"

"Perhaps not, but it is time to give him the protection of that title, when his real merits are not appreciated."

"Most majestic, sir. He is beholden to you."

"His behaviour, father, has been unexceptionable."

"Of course. Does Mary like him?"

"My wife," said Anthony, "has but one opinion after mine has been expressed."

"Indeed, and upon my word! Bless your soul, sir, did you marry your shadow?"

"You know, father, I have my own views of matrimony."

"Omit the last word, and insert whatever you please, sir, in its stead. The formula may be sworn to. Nevertheless I should like to know Mary's independent judgment about Williams."

"And I request, father, that the question may not be put to her."

"Very well, my lad; no trifling with married rights; but keep your eyes open. Perhaps I'm wrong, the gout makes me peevish; but I have my doubts about him."

Mr. Forrest, senior, did not always know exactly how to manage his son, and in this case he defeated his own purpose. Anthony was a little piqued by his father's disparagement of one

whom he had chosen to honor, and a little indignant at what appeared to him the injustice of old age and infirmity. The consequence was that he began openly to speak of Williams as his friend, and instead of asking Mary's opinion of him in his present condition of life, he met any appearance of coldness or any expression of dislike on her part, in regard to Williams, with a request that he might be treated on all occasions with respect and attention. She obeyed as well as she could, accusing of malignity her own aversion to him, and blaming herself for finding it difficult to make this small return for her husband's kindness in revoking the interdict against her friendship with her dear friend, Lucy. Her distrust of Williams rested, however, on better grounds than that of old Mr. Forrest, for Anthony had told him nothing of Williams' former history, and had forbidden Mary to allude to it. The old gentleman was getting infirm, and giving up active life to a great extent. He thought, good-naturedly, that his son might be in the right after all, and let the matter pass by.

One morning Anthony received a private note in the Bank parlor; it was as follows:—

"DEAR SIR, "Chancery House, Chosen Forest.

"I HAVE been staying for some months at this place, by the advice of my doctors. My health is indifferent, and I live in a complete retirement, which I do not wish to disturb. Some information, however, which affects your public interests, has come accidentally into my possession, and a feeling of justice to you, if I may no longer call it friendship, makes me anxious to communicate what I have heard. As I must mention names, I would rather not do it in writing. Perhaps you can call upon me here; I am always at home.

"CATHERINE FRASER."

"P.S.—I hope I need not refer to anything that is past. We have both of us grown older."

This note threw Anthony entirely off his guard. He was surprised to hear that Mrs. Fraser was the occupier of the Chancery House, but her

having resided there for some months without interfering with him was satisfactory. He saw in this, and in the note itself, the evidence of a subdued and altered spirit; of such a change as she seemed to indicate when she spoke of growing older. Hearing nothing of her for several years, his feelings towards her had lost their anger, and his stern displeasure at her conduct had given place to something like a kindly recollection of the happy days she had so madly brought to an end. The mention of his public interests seemed also to give a business-like aspect to the affair, and to remove any scruples about the propriety of paying her a visit; so in the afternoon he took his horse, and rode over to Chosen Forest. The path Mr. Williams had taken being an indifferent one for horses' feet, he took the more frequented road up the glen, on the other side of the stream, and close upon its bank. It was solitary enough, however. His own shadow was the first that had wound along it since the sun rose that day, except those of birds and falling leaves, of creeping animals and insects sparkling in the air. Very

early in the morning, and again at nightfall, a few farming men from the hills passed up and down. On market day a cart and a little flock of sheep left the glen regularly for Porchester; the cart returning, but the sheep never again; and on Sundays, before and after church, there was a small and straggling procession of men in gaiters and beaver hats, women in black shawls and bonnets, and girls with rosy faces, quick steps, and downcast eyes. Of regular traffic this was about the sum, and it was no wonder, therefore, that Anthony met no one as he rode towards the Chancery House, between the stream and the golden larches. To get to the house he had to cross the brook by a small stone bridge at the top of the glen, a little below the waterfall. Stopping on the bridge, and looking up towards the cascade, he saw Mrs. Fraser sitting on the ground, almost in the drip of the water. There were trees all round, and the falling stream was a white line in a gloomy hollow, but a small opening let in a strip of sunshine which fell on the green bank and across the spray. Mrs. Fraser

sat on the bank in the midst of the sunshine, and was seen therefore very plainly. She wore no widow's weeds—why should she?—but her dress was black and simple; a black handkerchief was tied over her head, and a white one round her neck. She sat with her hands upon her knees and her face bowed over them. Her face, when seen in outline only, had lost nothing of its early beauty, but it looked weary and habitually sad. She heard the sound of the water, but not that of the horse's feet; and Anthony had dismounted in the farm-yard, and was walking up the bank towards her, before she saw him. She rose, and held her hand out silently; but he only bowed, and the hand fell upon her dress.

"I have received a note from you, madam. I have come according to your desire."

Mrs. Fraser flushed slightly; his manner was so formal; but Owen's warning rang in her ears, and she answered quietly—

"I am sorry to give you the trouble, but written accusations are dangerous."

"I cannot suffer you to apologise," said Anthony,

with the politeness which was natural to him. "My thanks are due both for your communication and your discretion. Speech is often safe where writing is fatal."

"I live," Mrs. Fraser said, "as you see, in absolute retirement. The noise of this water is the loudest that I often hear, and this glen is the usual limit of my wanderings while I stay here; but in my idleness the gossip of the town amuses me, and there are one or two parties, whom, perhaps, you will not require me to name, who are well informed about it, and send it to me for my entertainment."

"I can have no object, Mrs. Fraser, in intruding needlessly into your confidence. The names of your informants must be indifferent to me. I am only interested in the facts, if any, which they have revealed."

"The facts," she answered, "that have come to my knowledge at present are few, but I shall learn more hereafter, and, in the meantime, what I do know is important. You have, I believe, a club, whose meetings are held at your

house, and in which private business is transacted relating to the politics of the town."

"That is matter of public notoriety," said Anthony.

"I know that; but it is not so notorious that the secrets of the club are betrayed."

Anthony looked startled.

"My friends," he said, "are men of honor—the thing is impossible."

"The treason does not appear to be among your friends; at least, it is not ascribed to them."

"How can it be otherwise?"

"I am not able to say, but it is said that regular intelligence of your proceedings goes to the opposite party from the house of a Mr. Hathorne, who, it is also said, has some connection with your family; in what way I am not aware."

"Hathorne!" cried Anthony, and he looked grave and uneasy. "I am incredulous," he said, at last. "Can you state a single fact concerning our private proceedings which has been thus disclosed?"

"Immediately: you are planning with great secrecy a large purchase of property in the High Street."

"Ha!" cried Anthony, very much astonished. "This is serious, Mrs. Fraser. You say this intelligence came from the house of Mr. Hathorne?"

"So I am informed."

"Do you know anything more about it?"

"Not at present."

"You are likely to do?"

"Yes; very likely."

"The intelligence is disagreeable, Mrs. Fraser, but I am obliged to you for it in the highest degree."

"I am very glad to serve you."

"I am so much interested in this affair," said Anthony, "that I must put myself under still further obligation to you. You say you are likely to hear more; when you do so, may I beg you to communicate with me again?"

"Certainly."

"It is not desirable that this or any future

interview between us on these subjects should be spoken of beyond ourselves," said Anthony.

"There is little danger. The people here are not very curious. The next time you come, however, there is a more private way. You see the bridge you crossed? The road over it passes by the house, bends round in the wood beyond there, leaving the house to the right, and crosses the hills behind us. Any one riding by is immediately hidden, as you see, among the trees, and is supposed to be going over the hills. I and my maid occupy that side of the house, and there is a short path from the road, a little beyond the bend in it, leading through the wood to our entrance, which is used by no one but ourselves. If you turn into that path and come to our private door, no one else will be the wiser; and you can get back to Porchester by continuing your journey over the hills, instead of returning down the glen. It is, perhaps, a mile further."

"Thank you. That may be more prudent. Time is everything in politics, and I shall be extremely anxious to hear additional details."

"You shall not have long to wait. May I give you any refreshment?"

"No, I thank you, madam; you have given me what is less agreeable, but much more valuable. Good-day."

He offered her his hand. It was done formally and stiffly. The proud blood tingled in her fingers, but she did not revenge herself by withholding them. She was standing motionless by the waterfall long after he had ridden away.

He rode away in great disquietude, and with sufficient cause. He had been defeated, as will be remembered, when he proposed in the Town Council a plan for certain alterations for lessening the dangers of the Bridge Hill. His plan, if adopted, would have required an Act of Parliament to carry it out, for the property to be altered belonged to a young spendthrift lord, who would have been glad enough to sell it, but could not do so on account of the entail. Soon afterwards, however, certain events occurred which gave the dilapidated owner the power of sale. This fact became known to Anthony, who

communicated it to the club, and suggested a highly patriotic and spirited course of action. His proposal was that before the affair got wind, so as to bring competitors into the field, the Borough Wall Club themselves should privately offer a handsome price for the whole property,—become, if possible, the purchasers, and then confound their enemies by boldly making the projected alterations themselves. The purchase was a heavy one, the property consisting of about twenty houses, forming one whole side of the street at the dangerous part, but as Anthony backed his proposal with a statement that the Bank would be prepared to find the money, it was agreed to with enthusiasm, and secret negotiations with the noble owner's agent were at once set on foot. This agent lived in London, and it was supposed that everything would be kept snug and quiet till the thing was done. Now, when Anthony first heard from Mrs. Fraser that the secrets of the club were betrayed, his suspicion fell immediately on Owen Williams, but when this especial secret was mentioned he dis-

carded the idea, knowing that the matter had never been spoken of before Williams, who, though often present at the club's informal meetings, was, of course, not one of its members. The mention of Hathorne's house as the source of the intelligence gave, under these circumstances, a new and grave aspect to the affair. Anthony had never quite forgotten poor Mary's indiscreet revealing of his early schemes in gossiping with her friend Lucy. He always retained an uneasy feeling of doubt as to the extent to which her prudence might be trusted. He was angry with Hathorne himself, because he still kept the refractory foreman; and cross with his sister, because he himself had given way in regard to Mary's friendship with her. He was quite inclined to believe anything against Hathorne's household, and not unwilling to suppose that mischief had followed from Mary's disinclination to obey him, and he came, therefore, easily, and not unnaturally, to the conclusion that Mary must have disclosed the club's intentions in her talk with Lucy, and that Lucy had

repeated to her brother what she had heard. "To her brother, indeed!" he added to himself; "it might be to any one or every one in the whole town. Lucy has no more reticence than a talking jay, and no more prudence than a poodle. It 's madness to run the risks of intimacy with her where grave interests are concerned."

He rode along, turning the matter over in his mind, and resolving that Mary's intercourse with Lucy Hathorne must be put an end to. It was not a pleasant subject, however, and it became less and less so as he pondered over it. "Her love for Lucy," he thought, "is most pure and perfect; to interrupt it seems as harsh a thing as if one should do violence to the arms they wind round each other's necks. Lucy is an excellent girl, too, in her way, though she is to blame for having such a brother. But women can never hold their tongues, and the interests of a whole town must not be sacrificed to their little attachments. If Mary enjoys the privilege of being mistress in a house where important secrets are discussed, she must

accept the necessary restraints of such a position. Simplicity and openness are admirable qualities, but it is only a man's judgment that can keep them from being dangerous to society."

His resolution being much strengthened by these reflections, he began to consider the best way of carrying it into effect. "Her disclosures to Lucy," he continued, "are doubtless unconscious ones. She would not wilfully abuse my confidence, but it comes out in the babble of gossip. If I charge her with the fault, she will still believe herself innocent, and think herself aggrieved. I would rather not grieve her—she is so sweet a wife; a simple exercise of authority on my part will hurt her less than the knowledge that I mistrust her; I had better give the command without the reasons. It would come less harshly if I gave it first as a temporary measure; till I hear more particulars from Mrs. Fraser, for example. Mrs. Fraser is much improved. She may be useful. Of course I must say nothing about her to Mary. She knows nothing, and it is not worth while."

He had thought very little about Mrs. Fraser herself as he rode along.

Mary had spent the afternoon in her garden; all alone, except when Master Tony made a rush at her from the house: sometimes for the simple purpose of kissing her; sometimes to demand justice on the servant, who had refused to give him china tea-cups, to make huts for his beavers, or to light a match for the setting of his ark on fire. At breakfast that day Mary and her husband had had one of their not infrequent disputes about the boy's treatment, and Mary had been thinking of it all day.

"It must be wrong," she thought, "and I must surely be to blame. This want of harmony between us will become more serious as the child gets older. If his mother pursues one system with him, and his father another, we shall ruin him between us. He will come perhaps to love me best, which he should not do; or to take my gentleness for weakness, and despise me for it, which would be no better. It is perfect torture to me to see Anthony punish him; I had ten times

rather he punished me myself; and his indulgence and flattery at other times is what I cannot anyhow think wise; but then if he insists upon doing this, my constant opposition must surely make matters worse for the child, as well as for ourselves. I think the best way must be for me, instead of disapproving, to acquiesce quietly, and never let Tony think of me either as a refuge from his father's anger or a restraint on his father's kindness. At all events we should work more in unison if I did so, and perhaps my own views would have more weight with Anthony by degrees. If we are not to make this a sore point always, somebody must yield, and I suppose it is more difficult for a man to do so. It's hard enough for myself, so I should not blame Anthony if he finds it a little harder. He may be the best judge too. I don't think so; but I am very young, and know very little. I may be proud enough if my boy only grows up equal to his father."

So Mary, taking the fault upon herself, and doing penance for her husband's error, determined that there should be no more disputes between

them; that, her own natural good temper lessening her temptations, she would make it her special duty to prevent them, and that if she could not bring her boy up exactly as she had hoped to do, the failure should not spring from the quarrels of his parents.

It was in this temper that she met Anthony at the tea-table, knowing nothing of his visit to Chosen Forest, for he rode out often in the afternoon and was not accustomed to give an account of himself. She had thought of whatever trifling things were likely to please him; had put a nosegay of autumnal flowers on the table, and began to play one of the tunes he liked best (she had learnt to play simple music admirably) when she heard his foot on the stairs. He noticed these little things. A woman, yielding her own will for love's sake, makes the light tender all about her, and he noticed that also. He was full of a kind of pity for her. "How sweet she looks!" he thought. "If she had only a man's prudence and foresight! I shall be as gentle as I can."

"Mary," he said, after some ordinary conversa-

tion, "I think your friend Lucy is quite well at present?"

"Oh, yes; she never was better, or prettier."

"And her arm is out of the sling?"

"Oh, a month ago. You make poor Martin's mishap worse than it really was. She was skipping yesterday with Tony."

"She does not need your care, then, as a matter of kindness?"

"I should think not, indeed. She is quite able to take care of herself."

"My love, I am always sorry to interfere with your private friendships, but public life calls upon us for many personal sacrifices."

"Has anything happened, dearest?" said Mary, looking rather alarmed.

"In politics, my love, things are happening every day, and new duties are often imposed upon us suddenly. It is painful to me to put any restraint upon you, but I must seriously desire that for the next week you will discontinue all communication with the Hathornes."

"Dearest, I thought you had agreed."

"Yes, Mary, I agreed to waive my former objection. Perhaps it would have been better if I had adhered to it. At any rate, circumstances make it necessary that I should renew it in this modified form. What I request is that you will neither visit nor converse with Lucy or her brother for one week from to-day."

Mary went and knelt at his side, stroking his hands between her own.

"Tell me what they have been doing, Anthony."

"My love, I can give no reasons."

Now Mary was very sorry. She had resolved that nothing should make them quarrel any more, but her resolution was put to a much harder test than she had looked for. There was something unspeakably painful in the notion of friendship broken without a cause, and something intensely aggravating in a request of this kind, followed by those quiet words, "My love, I can give no reasons." She would have nothing to say to the word Tyranny in connection with her husband, but it knocked hard at her heart and added to her uneasiness. Yet if she resisted now, the

sweet spirit of peace must be driven away; her resolution must own itself defeated at the outset: Anthony would certainly be angry, and his anger would add tenfold to the difficulty about the child. She must either try the experiment of yielding altogether to his wishes for the present, or give up the hope she felt of a perfect harmony between them in the future. In this gentle and loving temper, with these hopes rising into prayers as she knelt beside him, Mary chose, if not the bolder course, at least the one involving more immediate sacrifice. She resolved to do what he desired.

"For one week dearest, you wish me not to speak to the Hathornes?" she said, looking tearfully in his face.

"I do, Mary: I desire this seriously."

"I may send Lucy a short note, may I not, to tell her she must not try to see me for a week; that I cannot explain the reason now, but that I will do so hereafter?"

"Yes, Mary, you may write such a note, if you think it necessary."

"I trust to you entirely, dear love. I will do as you wish, and not ask for any reason."

As Anthony looked at her that moment, he felt a strong inward impulse to clasp her round the waist, take her on his knee, tell her all he had heard and all he had feared, run the risk of hurting her by his suspicions, and take the chance of finding her future wisdom equal to her love. But his manly prudence overcame the folly of the angels. He did put his arms round her and kiss her; he thanked her for her compliance, and praised her sense of duty; she went to sleep that night regretful for Lucy's sake, yet very happy for her husband's, but he had not told her the secrets in his mind.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHANCERY HOUSE.

To use the language of diplomacy is to use bad language, as everybody knows; but if this might be endured in the present instance, it would be necessary to say that Mr. Williams was not exact when he gave Mrs. Fraser the intelligence, communicated by her to Anthony, that the knowledge of the club's intended purchase of property on the Bridge Hill was obtained from Richard Hathorne's household. There was, however, a connection between them. Owen Williams, even when he was lying, seldom made a statement that could be shown to have been absolutely without any foundation whatever. As a practical man, he thought it a dangerous habit; and usually took care to have some matter of fact near the base of

any works of imagination, to which, if necessary, he might refer with honest pride. So, in this case, there was a connection between Hathorne and the intelligence. The connection was this—Hathorne had told Mr. Hornbeam that an acquaintance of his, a draper, living on the Bridge Hill, in one of the spendthrift lord's houses, had said that he was ready to join the Porcite party and vote for the new road, if only compensation for the probable injury his business might sustain, by the diversion of traffic, were offered to him. This was before the presentation day, and Hornbeam mentioned the circumstance to Owen. The mention of it led to certain inquiries about this property, in the course of which the name of the spendthrift lord's agent was introduced. He lived, as has been said, in London, and it happened that Williams knew him well in the way of business. Going up to town soon after, Williams thought it worth his while to call on him, and during their interview, under the seal of friendship, and for the purpose of asking Mr. Williams' valuable advice, the agent stated to

him the fact that Anthony and his friends were secretly negotiating for the private purchase of this estate. Mr. Williams gave his advice, which was, that there should be no hurry in the matter, and took the information home for his own benefit. When he said, therefore, diplomatically, that the information came from Hathorne's house, the statement was not exact, but there was, nevertheless, what any diplomatist would call a strong foundation for it.

Whatever Mary might be, Lucy was undoubtedly a chatterbox, and between her private exclamations to divers friends, and Mr. Fowkes' interest among the servants at the Bank, who found it pleasant, in case of holidays, to be on good terms with the landlord of the Four All's, enough was said, and Owen's ears collected a sufficient quantity of it, to make it certain that for a week at least Mary's intercourse with the Hathornes was to be interrupted. He did not run much risk of error when he straightway inferred that this was in obedience to Anthony's commands. In the course of a few days he had

another interview with Mrs. Fraser, who, having received his instructions, sent a short message to Anthony, requesting him to come again. He went accordingly: he rode across the bridge, past the Chancery House, as if going over the hills, and turned his horse down the short path leading to Mrs. Fraser's private entrance. It was private enough for any purpose of secrecy. A semicircular belt of evergreen firs, within a dozen yards of the door, concealed it at all seasons of the year from passengers on the road or stragglers in the larch wood. One end of the old house was thus enclosed. There were two large windows in it, the upper one being that of Mrs. Fraser's sitting-room, the lower room belonging to her maid. The open space between the trees and the house wall was covered with grass, kept roughly mown, and the path to the door was only a beaten track over it. There was an old garden seat in this little green clearing, and you might sit there, watching the squirrels all day long, unconscious of human faces. Anthony found a hook in the

wall, ready for his horse's bridle, and was led up-stairs by the Italian maid, who opened the door for him. Mrs. Fraser, better dressed than usual, was sitting in a good-sized room furnished with great luxury. There were couches and ottomans covered with warm-coloured damask, a turkey carpet, and silk curtains. Certain bronzes, of excellent taste and workmanship, with many lighter ornaments of a costly kind, stood about on various resting-places; there were two mirrors in the room, and a side table was covered carelessly with unfinished drawings. Anthony looked round in some surprise.

"I make some show, you see," said Mrs. Fraser, who had risen to meet him; "my means are ample, and my pleasures are few. I look forward to winter and illness, and provide what comfort I may for melancholy hours."

"You are too solitary, Mrs. Fraser."

"It is my fate," she answered, and pointed to a seat among soft cushions. "You come on business," she said. "I must not forget that your time is valuable, if mine is worthless. I

have heard a few more facts that may be important."

She related several. This time, however, they were the secrets of Mr. Hornbeam's party, not of his own. Anthony was much interested.

"It is strange," said he, "that Hornbeam should let these things be talked about. He is a fool not to keep them closer, for they must, of course, have been the subject of gossip before they reached you."

"Of course. We none of us know what is talked of at our very doors. I heard, along with these, some curious gossip about yourself; part of it ridiculous, and none of it perhaps worth repeating."

"I beg you to repeat it. The great want in politics is the want of perfect information."

"It was said," replied Mrs. Fraser, quietly, and looking down at her hands, "that Mrs. Forrest had been in the habit of visiting at Mr. Hathorne's, and that you had forbidden the continuance of the acquaintance."

Anthony colored and frowned.

should be forbidden on the following evening; that the crier should be sent round at once with a proclamation to this effect, and that any one acting in violation thereof should be summarily committed. The object of the meeting had been known the day before, and various steps had been taken by the townspeople. The High School boys were the first to move. They drew up a children's petition in the playground. The petition set forth that to interfere with the festivities, but more especially with the fireworks, would be to act the part of monsters, to make life no longer desirable, and to compel the youth of Porchester to reconsider the grounds on which respect and obedience were rendered to the authorities, both of a public and private character. This petition was sent rapidly round to all the schools, and was signed by every little boy who could write his name. Most of the girls, however, stood aloof and refused their signatures, on the ground that they could feel no confidence in the other sex, till the cats, who were missing in all directions, came home again safe and sound.

Two other memorials were presented to the magistrates; one, from the tradesmen in the Market-place, who, with the exception of the gunsmith, were unanimous in supporting Mr. Cloudesley; the other, from the archæologists of the town, headed by Mr. Daniel Hobbes, deprecating, with equal unanimity, any attempt to abolish so old and interesting a custom. A Roman Catholic priest and an Evangelical clergyman attended personally at the Town Hall to give evidence for and against the suppression, but the magistrates sat with closed doors and did not examine witnesses. It was rather a warm meeting. Anthony Forrest and Mr. Cloudesley were the only two magistrates who were members of the Borough Wall Club, but on this occasion they took opposite sides. Anthony was irritable with his private troubles, and was the more easily offended. He took offence at Mr. Cloudesley's manner, and at the fact of his having acted in this case without any previous consultation between them. In addition, his sympathies were chiefly with the school-boys and the archæologists.

He felt no particular pity towards Mr. Cloudesley for the loss of his tureen, or towards Leonora for the disappearance of her favorite. He liked popular sports; had a personal pleasure in fireworks and bonfires, and thought the tradesmen took a selfish view of the matter. Moreover, he understood the temper of the working classes better perhaps than his associates, and felt grave doubts as to whether their ancient customs could be suddenly suppressed without a disturbance. Having stated his views on these points with his usual eloquence, he found several supporters among the assembled magistrates, but he found also that his party was in a decided minority. Still more irritated by this discovery, he spoke angrily, gave his opponents still further advantage as a matter of course, and had the mortification of seeing Mr. Cloudesley's proposal adopted by three-fourths of the meeting.

"Gentlemen," said Anthony, rising in great wrath, "I wash my hands of this business. Send your proclamation round and take the consequences. I warn you that the peace of the town

will be broken, and I throw upon your shoulders the responsibility of what may occur."

"Of course," said one of the older magistrates, smiling rather dryly, "we are quite aware of our collective responsibility, Mr. Forrest: we have not the least desire to lay it upon any single individual. He speaks," he whispered to the next on the bench, "as if he were king of the town." To which the other nodded. Anthony left the Town Hall in dudgeon, and betook himself to the Bank parlor; wrapping the robe of silence about his outraged dignity and saying nothing even to his wife beyond a statement of the bare fact that the Guy Fawkes revels were to be prevented. The next morning, however, he ordered the blunderbusses of the Bank to be reloaded and the cutlasses sharpened, and displayed these weapons rather ostentatiously near the counter.

"Hallo, Forrest!" said one of the bench, who came in with some notes in his hand. "You are fortifying, eh? Bloody work to night, I suppose? The town going up like a rocket, eh?"

"I have your money in my chests, sir, under

my keeping, and I do not laugh at prudence, or forget my responsibility," was Anthony's haughty answer.

"A slap in the face, eh, Forrest? Capital hit, that! Well, load your guns, and don't be frightened. I'll guarantee the peace of the town."

"On a bill, sir, your guarantee is unexceptionable. In politics it is worth—so much," said Anthony, and he threw his pen into the fire.

"Bless the man," thought his brother magistrate, as he left the Bank, "he 's gone politically mad. I call this a question of squibs, and he calls it politics! Well; it might have been safer to have the specials; but never mind."

At the meeting the day before, after Anthony had left, it had been suggested that in case his fears had any good foundation, it would be as well to swear in a few special constables. But the suggestion was negatived rather contemptuously; were they to confess their weakness in a trifle of this kind? The very appearance of preparation would make a disturbance probable, simply by putting it into people's heads. Was

there anybody in the town so bold as to resist the authority of a bench of magistrates? If any such individual showed himself, they would commit him instantly. So that afternoon, and again on the following morning, the crier went round the town, forbidding either fire-works or bonfires, and promising to all offenders against the proclamation a night's lodging in the Black Hole.

It was not a very propitious time for such a proclamation. The manufacturers of the town had been turning off a number of hands, and the approach of winter made their prospects rather gloomy. In addition, the artizans generally were discontented, because Mr. Hathorne had altered his machinery in a way opposed to their prejudices, and the alteration, being an improvement, was likely to be adopted in other factories also. Finally, there had just been a heavy failure in a manufacturing village two or three miles off, which had thrown several hundred young fellows of rather a desperate character out of employment. Anthony, reckoning upon these things, had foreseen that if a row of any kind

took place it would find plenty of abettors, but he was almost the only one who thought there could be any danger. He continued silent, and remained in the Bank all day. Mary having gone to see Lucy in the afternoon, he desired her to come home before nightfall; and about five o'clock she came home, accordingly, under the escort of Martin Dove.

"Stay with us this evening, Martin," she said, with one of her bright smiles, and Martin stayed.

There were not many people in the Market Place, but half an hour afterwards a little shout was heard, and a pattering of feet, which made Mary go to the window. A squib was just exploding on the ground, and one of the town constables had seized the boy who lit it and was marching him off, followed by a crowd of children. Almost immediately afterwards, a number of young men were seen to rush from a dark alley on the side of the Market Place opposite to the Bank, not very far from the Hotel. This alley communicated by various crooked lanes with a densely populated back

settlement of small courts and streets. The youths who first issued from it ran into the centre of the Market Place and formed a ring there. They were followed directly by another batch, dragging after them faggots, casks, logs of timber and bundles of straw. The ring opened; the combustibles were piled within it in less than a couple of minutes; a match was lighted, and the bonfire was in a blaze before the other constable on duty could quite collect his senses or seize anybody by the collar. When he did seize the first he could lay hold of, his senses speedily forsook him again. He was pinioned by as many hands as could fasten on him; was rolled on the ground; was lifted in the air; had his coat pulled off at one end, his boots at the other, his constabulary staff thrown into the fire, and what was left of himself and his clothes put under the public pump and laid out afterwards to dry at his leisure. While this took place, a great crowd collected; a wild dance was going on round the bonfire; shouts and laughter deafened everything, and squibs

began to fly about in extraordinary numbers. The people had laid their plans exceedingly well, and were perfectly successful. A constant supply of fuel and fireworks came from the dark alley, and it was clear that Gunpowder Plot would be celebrated with unabated splendor for that night at least. No harm was being done so far, however. The shops were already shut up, in anticipation of some disturbance. The flame of the bonfire rose as high as the chimney tops, and there was a prodigious noise, but the space was ample and the noise was not ill-natured.

"A pretty piece of business!" said Anthony, looking over his wife's shoulder through the window. "A valuable lesson to the law-breakers. Authority is defied successfully. We shall feel the effects of this for many a day."

"It seems to be all fun," said Mary. "It was a pity the magistrates thought of putting it down."

"The bench chose to act on its own stupid ignorance, in contempt of my knowledge and experience," said Anthony. "They are well served."

"How wild the people look, dearest; they seem quite frantic with delight. Only see how those men are dancing round the bonfire. They might be demons."

"They would be, if anything opposed them now," replied Anthony, rather gravely.

"You don't think there will be any mischief done, Anthony?"

"Perhaps not, if they are let alone."

"I should think nobody would like to interfere with them just now," said Mary.

"I shall be surprised if it proves so," he answered: "there are men on our bench who know no more how to manage a mob than how to catch a camel." As he spoke, a messenger came hastily to summon him to a meeting of magistrates with all possible speed. "I thought so," said Anthony. "Tell them I remain at home."

"Is that best, dearest?" his wife asked, when the messenger had gone. "They may do something foolish without you."

"Unfortunately, Mary, my presence is no

check upon their folly. Let them carry out their own plans."

"But you would have Mr. Cloudesley with you, at all events, and they can't collect many to-night."

"Mr. Cloudesley prefers his cat and his dinners to my friendship and the public good," said Anthony, and he related what had passed the day before, to Mary's surprise and regret. All this time Martin Dove had been buried in a book and forgotten. He raised his eyes for a moment.

"Mrs. Forrest, do you think the house is on fire?"

"Not that I know of, Martin. Why, you have been missing everything."

"I thought there was a smell of smoke," said Mr. Dove, reverting to his studies.

"So there is; come to the window. This is the Fifth of November."

"Would you mind if I finished this chapter first, Mrs. Forrest?"

"Yes; decidedly. I want you to come directly. Don't you see I am standing alone?"

Anthony had left the window, and was walking with his arms folded, up and down the room. Martin shut his book and went to Mary's side.

"The night is so mild," she said, "we may just as well stand on the balcony. We shall see better and hear what the people say." She put a shawl over her head, opened the window, and went out with Martin.

"She might have left that fool at his books," thought Anthony, with an uncomfortable irritation. He was following them to the balcony, but changed his mind and stayed in the room.

"Won't you come out?" said Mary, looking round under the window sash.

"No; I don't wish to show myself at present. Let them do without me."

He could hear the shouting, banging, and fizzing, well enough, and the light of the bonfire was increasing every minute.

"Something is going to be done," said Mary, after a short interval, under the sash again. "Pray come."

He went up to the window and looked out. There was a stir at one corner of the Market Place, and in a few seconds one of the town fire-engines rattled in and took up its station within fifty yards of the bonfire, just outside the principal crowd. Anthony smiled contemptuously and looked on in silence. Not so the crowd below him. A thousand faces turned suddenly from the fire; there was a rush and a tremendous noise. The firemen, who were uncoiling the hose and opening the water-plugs as fast as they could, were swept at once out of the Market Place like so many shavings; the engine was overturned, the hose dragged about and trampled on and finally thrown over the bonfire, where it lay like a great snake, hissing and crackling. The people seemed to think it a magnificent joke and roared with outrageous laughter, but a tremor of fear ran through all the houses round about, for those who looked from their windows saw that the mob, whether they knew it or not, had got the town in their power. The magistrates, who, in their hasty meeting, had given orders for the advance of the

fire-engine, witnessed its destruction from the windows of the Town Hall with considerable dismay.

"This will never do," said one pompous old gentleman. "We must commit these men."

"Hear, hear," said another.

"Suppose we catch 'em first," said a third.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Cloudesley, who was both vexed and alarmed, but was too proud to show it, "we must take vigorous steps at once, or we may have to rue this night after all. Our horses are all below. Let us mount, ride up to the crowd with all the constables we can muster, command them to disperse immediately, and threaten to read the Riot Act and send for the military."

This course, which, though doubtful as to its issue, was perhaps the wisest under the circumstances, was adopted with true British spirit. Five mounted magistrates and nine constables, the whole effective force of the borough at that critical moment, mustered in front of the Town Hall and advanced boldly towards the bonfire,

Mr. Cloudesley leading the way. Mr. Cloudesley had private as well as public reasons for anxiety; his daughters had been spending the afternoon at a friend's house and were to walk home at eight o'clock, under the escort of two servants. Their way led across the Bridge Hill, but nowhere nearer to the Market Place, and under ordinary circumstances there was no fear of interruption as they returned; but it was not easy to say what might happen in the present aspect of affairs. No available means of communicating with them could be found at the moment, and Mr. Cloudesley, too gallant to leave his post himself, carried his parental fears with him in addition to his magisterial ones, as he rode forward towards the boisterous scene of revelry. At the first words of command from the mounted magistrates the crowd paused a little. Five horsemen and nine constables in a body looked formidable, and there was a sufficient lull for Mr. Cloudesley to be heard, threatening the Riot Act and the military. But when he had done, though those in front stood hesitating and thinking of

consequences, those round the fire behind began to laugh again, and a volley of squibs was thrown into the air. Four of the horses stood fire very well, but the pompous gentleman, whose soul was set on committing the mob, had a charger under him with stronger instincts than his own, who, as the sparks flew round his nostrils, immediately threw up his legs and set off at a hard gallop across the open part of the Market Place and down the nearest street. His flight excited the derision of the crowd. Some ran after him, others jeered at the remaining magistrates and plied them with fresh squibs. A sudden attempt to rush forward and take possession of the bonfire, on the part of the nine constables, was unsuccessful, and the whole force, horsemen included, was driven back to the pavement, where it made a stand in front of a grocer's shop; the constables with their backs against the shutters, the four magistrates in front of them with the hind feet of their horses in the gutter. Things had come to this pass, and Mary, still on the balcony, was anxiously calling to her

"It was to be expected," he said, rather sharply, "that Lucy Hathorne would publish the fact immediately. I see she has maintained her character. May I ask what was the ridiculous part of the report?"

"It was the reason given for your prohibition. But I would rather not say any more about it," Mrs. Fraser added, hastily, taking up a book. "You will have a pleasant ride home: the air is charming."

"I particularly wish to know the reasons you refer to," said Anthony.

"They were simply absurd. Nothing is gained by repeating them."

"Everything is gained by accurate knowledge in matters of this kind."

"I am not sure of that. Besides it is disagreeable to me to tell such stories."

"In that case, madam, gallantry forbids me to say any more, though I could not withdraw my request on any other consideration."

"I am ridiculous myself," said Mrs. Fraser, laughing. "Of course there can be no real harm

in telling you. Indeed, you ought to know what is said, perhaps, if only to contradict it. It is simply that you broke off this acquaintance because you were jealous of Mr. Hathorne."

Anthony sprang to his feet.

"Mrs. Fraser, who has dared to say this?"

"I have no idea whatever. I heard it in the usual way, as part of the town gossip; that's all."

"The town gossip! The town bold enough to disgrace me by such a supposition! The town vile enough to slander my wife! This is news, certainly, Mrs. Fraser!"

Mrs. Fraser felt alarmed, his anger was evidently so violent. She had been following Owen's directions, and began to tremble for the consequences. What was done, however, could not be undone. She said something soothing, but Anthony would hardly listen to her.

"A libel like this," he said, "must be answered instantly. I must wish you good-day. Allow me to call upon you again on this day week, and if any new scandal has reached your ears let me entreat you to have no thought of concealing

it from me. I am indebted to you beyond measure."

Mrs. Fraser, a good deal relieved, parted from him with the promise that she would hide nothing she might hear. What he would do in the meantime seemed doubtful, but he was already obliged to her, and would come again.

"The reptiles!" Anthony thought, as he galloped home. "I have made a blunder; I have forgotten how vile they are. A charge like this can be answered in one way only. The risk must be borne."

He went straight to Mary.

"My love," he said, "you have obeyed me, and I thank you. I withdraw my prohibition. Go at once to Lucy, and spend the evening with her. I shall come for you at supper time."

Mary, surprised and overjoyed, could only thank him and admire him. "Ah!" she thought, "it was well to yield."

Mr. Williams heard what had happened next day. He smiled, and he was satisfied.

CHAPTER X.

MIASMATA.

"You have honored me with your friendship, Mr. Forrest."

"You have deserved it, Mr. Williams."

"And forgiven a grave offence."

"I have been glad of the opportunity of showing that a Christian gentleman can not only forgive offences but forget them."

This was said in the Bank parlor two days after Anthony's visit to the Chancery House.

"Mr. Forrest, friendship has its duties, and they are sometimes disagreeable."

"I should think, Mr. Williams, you are not a man to shrink from anything only because it is disagreeable."

"I am not, sir. Under the circumstances, I

should have been glad to have nothing to say, but my principle is to act my own part independently."

"I respect your principle, sir. You have bad news, I perceive."

"Only unpleasant. I called this morning at Mr. Hathorne's, and met Mrs. Forrest there. I was very glad to meet her there again."

Anthony frowned. "Explain yourself, Mr. Williams."

"Mrs. Forrest's visits have been interrupted; the interruption has been remarked; a slanderous construction has been put upon it. I have heard this made the subject of jest and conversation at the house of my tenant, Fowkes, among his customers."

"A disgraceful fact, and a discredit to the town, sir. I have heard of this already, and the vile slander is already answered. It is with my knowledge and approbation that Mrs. Forrest continues her visits at that house."

"It seems to be true that bad reports spread quickly. Since it has reached you by other

channels, I might have spared myself the task I had undertaken. I regret my haste, Mr. Forrest; but it remains in my memory, though you are good enough to forget it, that I once spoke lightly of Mrs. Forrest. I can never allow other people to do the same with impunity."

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Williams. If these slanders are ever repeated in your hearing, you will, I trust, give them the name they deserve."

"On that point, Mr. Forrest, I have not waited for your authority."

"Then my obligation is the greater, and Hathorne's also."

"I have heard nothing to the disadvantage of Mr. Hathorne," said Williams.

Anthony opened his eyes. "Nothing to his dis advantage? Your notions are peculiar. What can you mean?"

"That I heard nothing to his disadvantage."

"Pardon me. I trust I misunderstand you. In my view of the case, charges of this kind are injurious to both the parties concerned."

"Certainly, sir; but this story does not con-

cern Mr. Hathorne; the report is about Mr. Martin Dove."

"Good heavens! are you beside yourself?"

"What I heard spoken of was that Mrs. Forrest was in the habit of meeting Mr. Dove at Hathorne's house, and that Mr. Dove was in the habit of walking home with her very often."

"Well, sir, that is perfectly true. What then?"

"Not unfrequently in the evening, especially when you have chanced to be from home."

"Sir, he shall bring her home every night for a twelvemonth. What then?"

"Nothing, Mr. Forrest, to you or me, but it seems a ground for scandal to your enemies."

"Is such baseness conceivable! To join Mrs. Forrest's name injuriously with the name of a fool! This is worse than ever, Mr. Williams."

"To make a jest of it, even, at your expense," said Owen.

"A jest! This shall be no jest to the calumniators. Give me their names, Williams."

"I am sorry I cannot. They were common ale-house company, and quite beneath your notice. Indeed, excuse me if I say you make too much of it."

"Too much, Mr. Williams!"

"Not of the slander, but of its consequences. My opinion is that it has reached no further than a certain low class, who will always have some mischief to talk about. It rose out of the sudden stoppage of Mrs. Forrest's visits. Now she goes again as usual, the thing will die of itself, without spreading further. To take any action in the matter will be to publish what had better be dropped. I thought it my duty to give you this information, but only to put you on your guard against future malice."

"You have my sincere thanks, the more so because I can quite understand that the mention of such a subject must have been personally disagreeable to you, Williams. I respect your courage and candor. Whether I take any notice of these vile calumnies must be a matter for consideration. Under all the circumstances, I

should tell you perhaps that the reason why Mrs. Forrest's visits at Hathorne's house were for the time discontinued, was of a temporary nature, and had reference solely to measures of public policy."

Williams took leave, and Anthony was left to his reflections.

He was excessively angry. To have heard the same report from two different quarters; to find two different names coupled shamefully with the name of her who was his honorable wife; what could it mean? It meant, he did not doubt, that his baffled enemies were ready to use every effort malignity could suggest to wound and injure him. In both cases, the report might be traced to the Four All's. Mrs. Fraser had not told him her authority, but there could be no doubt about it. Fowkes was her usual informant, he believed. It was a piece of gross political spite, which should have his scorn and his defiance. They should have his answer. They should see that Mary's husband trusted her absolutely, and anywhere.

If he had carried out his own principle—if he

had confided as much in her prudence as in her purity, told her all he knew, and made her his counsellor—it might have been well. As it was, he encouraged her intimacy with Lucy; was more friendly than usual to Mr. Hathorne and to Martin Dove, and gave the latter gentleman especially frequent opportunities of escorting Mrs. Forrest home in the evening. But Anthony all the while was irritated and uneasy. The wound rankled. Mary he never doubted, but he regarded Hathorne as a half-disguised enemy, and Dove as a fool; and at times the thought of what malice or folly might do, or attempt to do, touched him to the quick. His reputation had been assailed—in his own town—by the citizens he had labored for and benefited. He began to see ingratitude in their faces; to hear suspicion in their voices: to feel that rumor, like a twisted snake, was creeping somewhere near him, and might at any moment strike him with its venomous head. His temper suffered greatly, the more so because the efforts he now made with redoubled energy to get the purchase

of the Bridge Hill property completed, were met by unaccountable delays and unforeseen obstacles; while Mrs. Fraser from time to time related to him all the steps he had himself taken in the matter, all the delays and difficulties, with the continued assurance that her information came through Fowkes, and originated at the house of Richard Hathorne. She told him nevertheless that the matter, as she understood, was not yet known to the Porcite leaders; and that Fowkes either thought it unimportant, or had reasons of his own for abstaining from bringing it before them. All other circumstances, except the unaccountable delays, confirmed this view of the case, and on the whole Anthony was perfectly bewildered. If Mrs. Fraser had been left to herself she would have made some blunder, and the deceit she was practising would have been exposed, but under Owen's directions the scheme worked successfully. Mrs. Fraser certainly did her best. Anthony's frequent and secret visits, and the confidential nature of their intercourse, were bringing back the warmth of life and the dreams of passion to her

ill-regulated mind. She drank the pleasure, and forgot the sin. Her beauty repaired itself; her strength renewed itself; she wore again about her the fascination of earlier and less guilty days. It had little power over Anthony. It made his visits agreeable as well as politic; but that was all. His nature was too honorable, his love for Mary too sincere, and his interests too much engrossed by other subjects, for even Mrs. Fraser's presence to be counted as temptation. But his faith in Mary was undergoing a terrible trial. He had, since his first visit to the Chancery House, studiously taken care that she should never overhear the proceedings of the club when the Bridge Hill property was mentioned. Yet the proceedings were known, and Hathorne's house was still pointed at as the place of their betrayal.

"Good Heaven! Does she listen at the key-hole?" thought Anthony, in a moment of extreme annoyance. He blushed for the injurious thought, but it had done lasting injury. He began, not to doubt his wife, but to watch her as if he doubted her.

CHAPTER XI.

GUNPOWDER PLOT.

On the 4th of November there was a meeting of magistrates in Porchester Town Hall. The sports and pastimes of the people were in question. The anniversary of Gunpowder Plot had for generations been celebrated in the market-place with a great bonfire, a considerable crowd, fireworks in all directions and the discharge of small arms from every entry. The previous day was always a great day of preparation. There was a little dark toy-shop in the High Street, kept by a lean, unlovely family of reputed misers, and in its window at this season, among dirty tops, unwashed marbles, arks with the very silt of the Flood upon them, and kites, seen dimly through a veil of dust, appeared an annual display of pyro-

technic marvels, not the less marvellous because, being newly made, they were comparatively clean. Here the impatient cracker, the fussy squib, the dignified Roman candle, the haughty rocket and the vexed catherine wheel, lay grouped together, harmless and lifeless hitherto; waiting for the vital spark which was to quicken their short-lived energies. Here, on the other side of the panes, came knots of children, pointing with excited gesture to the slumbering fires, or single individuals, glum and meditative, considering under bent brows the relation between the price of squibs and the purchasing power of a copper currency. When a boy from the High School, with the odor of silver on his jacket, entered the shop boldly with uplifted head, and, following upon his entrance, a thin grasping hand came groping for rockets or Roman candles over the dusty toys, signs of wonder and admiration manifested themselves in the little knot outside; the solitary calculator looked desperate and fumbled in his pocket; and the laws of property began to wear a malignant aspect in his eyes.

The traffic in these sulphurous wares was going on pretty fast while the magistrates held their meeting. There was an extraordinary demand for crackers of the larger kind, two High School boys of great spirit and well-known prowess having wagered, in the teeth of all the little girls in Porchester, that on the following evening fifty cats should cross the market-place with these agreeable stimulants tied to their tails. This wager was only one of a series, of which the audacity increased year by year. On the last fifth of November, a burning tar-barrel was rolled into the shop of Mr. Cane the druggist; squibs were cleverly attached to the street lamps without the knowledge of the lamp-lighter; and blue-lights were burnt in the churchyard. The celebration was becoming a saturnalia, and quiet people had often urged the authorities to put it down.

Mr. Cloudesley was a magistrate. His daughter Leonora had a pet cat of uncommon beauty; this cat had disappeared on the present occasion, under circumstances which left no doubt of its seizure

by the High School boys as one of their intended victims. Leonora screamed when she heard of it, laid her grief before her father, and invoked his magisterial fury on the offenders. Mr. Cloudesley was rather a proud man, and he was not disinclined to take up the matter warmly. His own temper had suffered the year before from the Guy Fawkes revelries. A lighted cracker had been tossed through his kitchen window just as dinner was being served; and the cook, frightened out of her wits, with a tureen of soup in her hands, had thrown everything into the fire, to the disappointment of Mr. Cloudesley's appetite and the ruin of his china. The kidnapping of his daughter's favorite before the next anniversary seemed to show the existence of a settled malice against himself, and when, on talking with some of his neighbours, he found his own views strongly supported, he resolved to do the town a service, and put a stop to the intended orgies for that year at least. A meeting of magistrates took place accordingly on the 4th of November. Mr. Cloudesley proposed that fireworks and bonfires

husband, who continued walking up and down the room, when Owen Williams entered.

"A bad business, Mr. Forrest."

"So I suppose, Mr. Williams."

"The magistrates are not aware of the danger," said Owen.

"The magistrates are fools," Anthony replied.

"This mob," said Owen, "might be let alone, but the village hands are coming."

"Are you sure of that, Williams?" said Anthony, stopping short. "Are you sure of that?"

"I am sure of it. My foreman has just told me."

"In our present state of defence they might sack the town," said Anthony.

"And they mean to do it," Williams answered. Anthony looked exceedingly grave for some seconds, and then began his walk again.

"Very well, Williams; it's no affair of mine. I am a private individual to-night; the Bank is fortified and can defend itself. My advice and warning have been equally disregarded. Let them do as they please."

Mary had come in from the balcony; Williams had bowed to her, and fixed his eyes upon her, and she had been listening in alarm to what he said.

"Dearest, can we do nothing?"

"Yes, Mary, we can wait and see those fine fellows punished as they deserve. It may be a lesson to them."

"The village hands," said Owen, "may be expected within an hour, some hundreds of them in a body. I understand their plan is to make an attack on Mr. Hathorne's factory first. They enter the town on that side."

Mary clung to Anthony's arm.

"Oh, husband! Does Hathorne know of this, Mr. Williams?"

"Not very likely, madam."

"Can we not warn him?"

"That might be done."

"That must be done," said Mary, looking anxiously in Anthony's face. He made no answer, but turned from her rather hastily. Mary went to the open window. "Martin Dove!" she cried.

He came immediately, stooping under the sash.

"Martin, will you do me a great favor?"

"A great favor, Mrs. Forrest? Oh, yes! to be sure I will."

"Then run as fast as ever you can to Richard Hathorne's. Tell him the village hands are coming to attack his factory. Tell him he may believe it, for I say so. Don't lose a moment. Go out by the back door; the front is barred."

Martin jumped in at the window; knocked his hat off in doing so, but was unconscious of the loss, and ran off at his best speed. Mary, flushed and trembling, again looked anxiously at her husband.

"Mr. Hathorne will be deeply indebted to you, madam," said Owen.

"I know he can defend the factory if he has time," she answered, and went again to the window.

"Mrs. Forrest's message may be of public service," said Williams to Anthony. "Hathorne may keep the village hands in check for a time."

Anthony went on with his walk, and made no reply.

"Do you know whether the military have been sent for?" said Owen.

"I know nothing, sir."

"A dozen soldiers would clear the Market Place in ten minutes," said Owen.

"It would take three hours, sir, to get a single hussar. The barracks are fifteen miles off."

"I believe, Mr. Forrest, that at this moment a troop of hussars is within three miles of Porchester."

"Ha!" said Anthony, stopping again.

"I dined yesterday with the colonel of the regiment. He happened to say this troop would march for Lincolnshire from the barracks this afternoon. They were not to pass through the town, but by the cross road a mile beyond the bridge. They should be there," pulling out his watch, "in, say, half an hour. They might be stopped, Mr. Forrest. If you choose to give me the proper authority, I will undertake to fetch them. My horse is in the yard."

Mary, whose attention had been divided between the tumultuous scene outside and the conversation within, gave an exclamation which brought both gentlemen to the window.

The magistrates and constables had held their ground very well in front of the grocer's shop, waiting for a favorable moment to charge the crowd again, and, in the meantime, reading the Riot Act. The people, so far, seemed bent rather on fun than mischief, and contented themselves with a continued volley of small combustibles, directed against the four horsemen and their supporters. When the reading of the Act was finished, however, some malicious individual in the rear of the crowd threw a stone over the heads of the rest. It was very high over their heads, and instead of hitting the magistrates it went right through one of the grocer's upper windows. The grocer was a choleric fat man. In a fit of passion he threw up the damaged sash, and fired a pistol at the mob. Whether anybody was injured by it was never certainly known. It was said the bullet broke a man's leg, but

a good many legs were broken before daybreak, and this particular fact was denied, especially by the grocer. The firing of this pistol, however, changed the whole spirit of the mob's proceedings. There was a yell and a rush, and immediately a shower of stones flew furiously through the grocer's panes. The pistol shot had caused Mary's exclamation, and Anthony and Williams were at the window time enough to see the shower of stones. Anthony suddenly loosened himself from the small tremulous hand which had fastened on his own.

"I must go, Mary. Their lives are in danger now."

"Their lives? But your own, Anthony—your own?"

"Mine must take its chance with the rest, since it comes to this. They deserved punishment, but I can't stand here to see them massacred."

Mary clung to him now in terror.

"The child!" she said: "think of the child."

"I do. He shall not blush for his father.

Williams, that shower of stones has changed everything. Look there! they are tearing up the pavement. Do what you can to help me. Ride up the road. Intercept that troop of hussars at all risks. Bring them in at a gallop; not a moment is to be lost! Stay, here is your authority."

He wrote rapidly on a sheet of paper; gave it to Owen; threw his arms round Mary and kissed her; left her speechless, holding by the table; and in another minute rode out of his stable-yard towards the crowd.

Owen paused a moment, took Mary round the waist to keep her from falling, and led her to the sofa. He trembled violently as he did so, but she was too frightened to observe it.

"Trust to me," he said, "Mrs. Forrest. Whatever happens outside, you shall be safe within an hour."

"I trust to heaven, Mr. Williams, and I thank you with my whole soul. Save Anthony! Be in time!"

He bowed over her hand, and was gone. Mary,

recovering herself almost immediately, went again on to the balcony, where everything could be seen. Anthony was galloping across the paved Market Place. The sudden clatter of his horse's feet behind them startled the crowd. They backed and opened, and Anthony dashed in. He stopped in front of the four magistrates, turned his horse's head, and waved his hand. There was a moment's pause.

"My friends," cried Anthony, "I like your bonfires. I'm no party to these proceedings. You know me very well. Hear me!"

The mob shouted, and waved their hats; Anthony saw they were disposed to hear him. His object was to gain time, and he began to harangue them. He knew how to make them laugh, and those within reach of his voice laughed heartily. Those behind, however, were still busy in an ominous way, getting up the paving stones, and when Anthony, pausing for a moment, turned to speak to his brother magistrates, another shower of missiles was on the point of being discharged, when an unexpected

diversion took place. The High School boys, with the dare-devil spirit of their age, were resolved to win their wager in spite of the tumult, and they won it at this critical moment. A shout, followed by the most hideous yelling and screaming, issued from the dark entry, and fifty cats, with lighted crackers banging away round their tails, rushed, in detachments of a dozen at a time, into the Market Place. The noise and splutter, the flashes and uproar, spread wider and wider, as the poor animals fled in all directions from the horror clinging to their extremities, and the people, excited and amused, dropped their stones and hunted the unlucky beasts from corner to corner. Mary saw that her husband's danger was over for the moment, and clapped her hands at a spectacle which, under other circumstances, would have roused all her pity. But while the hunt was going on, Martin Dove's unlucky stars brought him back again from Hathorne's house, simply to tell Mary he had executed her commission, and instead of leading him to the back door of the Bank, as they

should have done, directed his course straight through the tumultuous Market Place. Seeing everybody running, Martin ran also, and he had not run many yards before he knocked somebody down. Less than this would have been enough to bring a mob round him, for he was without his hat, and in the glare of the bonfire his lank light hair looked wild and remarkable. He was set upon immediately, and had enough to do to fight his way to the private door of the Bank. The door stood somewhat in a recess and there were two steps up to it, so having gained this position, he had his assailants at some advantage, and was defending himself valiantly with a stick he had snatched from one of them. Mary saw the whole proceeding from the balcony, and saw that poor Martin's life was in danger; for the unreasoning crowd, growing furious, was ready for any degree of violence, and a heavy stone had already struck the door. Mary ran down-stairs in fresh alarm. The door of the Bank itself was impregnable. This private door, a few yards

on one side of it, had a strong bar across it, but was considered the weak point in case of attack, and, by Anthony's orders, the male force of the establishment was collected, with weapons ready for use, in the entrance hall. This force consisted of the two Bank clerks, the footman, the groom, and the gardener. Mary found them all aghast, listening to the noise at the door.

"Open the door directly!" she cried. "Martin Dove is there: they are killing him."

"If you please, ma'am," said the head clerk, looking very nervous, "Mr. Forrest forbade us to open the door on any account."

"Mr. Forrest did not mean you to let his friend be murdered there. Do as I tell you! Open it immediately!"

The head clerk looked at the junior one, and did not move.

"There 'll be half a dozen murders instead of one, ma'am, if we open that door."

"Are you such cowards," cried Mary, "with these arms in your hands? Do you mean that I should open it myself?"

Another stone struck the door heavily.

"They'll burst it in!" said the footman, turning deadly pale. The gardener took up a blunderbuss and cocked it. The head clerk looked behind him, as if anxious to run away. Mary, at once terrified and indignant, glanced round at the timid faces near her, snatched the blunderbuss from the gardener, swung the bar round with her other hand, and drew the bolt of the door. It flew open; Martin fell back into Mary's arms; something touched the trigger of the gun, which exploded harmlessly upwards; the people, who were rushing in, recoiled before the explosion; Mary drew in the exhausted youth, and slammed the door to again. The head clerk sprang forward then, and refastened the bar.

"Make yourselves as safe as you can, and learn to be braver," said Mary to the doughty garrison. "Are you hurt, Martin? Come upstairs."

Martin was bruised all over, but had no broken bones. He limped up after her, protesting his

gratitude with tears in his eyes, and telling her that Hathorne, who felt equally indebted to her, had made immediate preparations for the defence of his factory. She made him lie on the sofa, and went again to the balcony. The crowd was scattered all over the Market Place, with the exception of one dense mass in front of the magistrates. One of these latter had disappeared; he had gone, by Anthony's advice, to meet Williams and the soldiers; the rest had not moved. Anthony was not speaking, but was looking anxiously towards the Bank and reining his horse in. He was just opposite to his own house, and in the intense glare of light he saw nearly all that had passed outside. He even recognised Mary's figure in the open doorway. The opening of the door had incensed him; her appearance there startled him; the discharge of the blunderbuss filled him with alarm, and Mary's reappearance on the balcony only relieved his fears when they had begun to be insupportable. She waved her handkerchief, and he touched his hat in answer. Seeing that she was safe, his spirits

rose again. Time was being gained, the village hands had not made their appearance, and the soldiers might be near. There was a still further respite. The Chester coach came rattling up from the High Street. The horses had taken fright, and were running away. Crash went the wheels against the overturned fire-engine, and the coach rolled over. The horses broke loose. The crowd ran after them as they had run after the cats. They were caught, mounted, galloped round and round with yells and laughter. The passengers had escaped without much injury and had taken refuge in a gateway, while their luggage, seized on by the crowd, was tossed about, struggled for, and scattered from side to side. This occupied the mob's attention for at least ten minutes, and even drew off the greater part of the compact mass in front of the constables. Anthony's eyes flashed.

"Now 's the time!" he cried. "Forward! Follow me!"

He dashed across the Market Place, followed by his three mounted colleagues and the nine

constables. His object was to seize a pile of stones which had been diligently collected in the rear of the principal crowd, a little in front of the Bank. Anthony had eyed the growing heap with the greatest possible uneasiness, feeling sure that it would be used against his little force sooner or later. It was captured by his sudden attack. The constables formed round it.

"Well done!" cried Anthony. "That gives us another quarter of an hour!"

He had scarcely said so, when a volley of stones came from the other side of the bonfire. Some of them whizzed over the constables' heads. The mob had got another magazine, and were exasperated by this attack.

"Stand firm!" Anthony cried. "They can hardly hit you. There are too many people between." He glanced up at the balcony. Mary stood there alone. "Go back, go back!" he cried, waving his hand. But she shook her head. She understood his danger, and had a desperate resolution to share it with him.

There they stood below her; the four un-

armed horsemen, the little knot of constables, and, opposed to them, a mob of many thousands. There were few fireworks to be seen now; but the bonfire, continually replenished, burned more fiercely than ever; the smoke and sparks flew high over the heads of the crowd; the shadows, though they flickered, were intensely black, for the pile was at a white heat, and the wild shouts and yells of the multitude seemed part of the unnatural atmosphere. Mary saw that, for the moment, she herself ran the greatest risk of being struck by the stones, because those who threw them were behind a crowd of their comrades, and had therefore to throw high in the air. But in her excitement she felt no terror. Her child was sleeping at the back of the house, and was safe, therefore. She would at any rate be near her husband. She saw the crowd opening a little. It was to give the stone-throwers a better chance, and in a moment their missiles began to tell. One of the constables was struck down, and a stone hitting Anthony's horse, made him plunge

violently. At this moment an unlooked-for effort was made from the Town Hall. Two magistrates, who did not care to show themselves in the Market Place, had at last been busy in swearing in special constables. A force of about thirty had been collected, and they were suddenly turned out to the rescue of Anthony and his little band. Coming down in order upon the mob, they caused a momentary panic. The avenue through which the stones were thrown closed up again, and the whole crowd recoiled. Anthony had no faith in these new auxiliaries; but seeing the recoil, he raised his arm to give the signal of advance to his own party, when the words, "The village hands!—the village hands!" repeated from mouth to mouth, made him pause again. It was time to pause. At the other end of the Market Place a band of several hundred men and youths was pouring in. They were armed with bludgeons; bare to the elbows; grim and ominous. They had made the intended attack on Hathorne's factory, and had been

repulsed, and instead of losing time in another assault they marched off at once for vengeance to the centre of the town. Mary gasped for breath as she saw them approaching. The mob received them with savage and exulting outcry. They came at a quick step, in something like order, right up one side of the Market Place, past the grocer's shop, and immediately charged the luckless body of special constables. These worthies were broken in an instant. They fled helter skelter and disappeared, and the terrible village hands, brandishing their bludgeons, wheeled round upon the mounted magistrates. Poor Mary, who saw it all from her balcony, clasped her hands and gave a cry of despair, while her eyes, turning from the advancing rioters, gazed desperately upon the entrance to the High Street. Not in vain; not in vain. Whether for good or evil, Owen Williams had kept his word. The High Street pavement was already covered with sparks from the hoofs of the horses; the ring of arms had been loud, but not long, on

the Bridge Hill. Led on by Williams and the magistrate, the hussars, three abreast, their carbines loosened and their swords drawn, came dashing at full gallop round the corner of the Market Place.

Mary did not faint, but she clung to the balcony railings, and dropped upon her knees. There was no battle below. There was a shriek, a panic, a breathless and reckless flight. Even the village hands never thought of standing for a moment against that charge of horse. In ten minutes there was not a soul in the Market Place except the magistrates, the eight constables, Owen Williams, and the brave hussars.

CHAPTER XII.

FAILING HEALTH.

When the peace of the town was definitely secured; when some scores of the rioters had been seized and locked up in the Town Hall for the night, the black hole being far too small for their accommodation; when mutual congratulations had been exchanged between the soldiers and the magistrates, and there was time to make inquiries and receive explanations; it was found that Mr. Daniel Hobbes, whose non-appearance had been more than once remarked, was able to give a good account of himself; that the other members of the Club had been engaged about the special constables; Mr. Forrest senior, who was laid up with the gout, excepted; that Mr. Hornbeam and his party had kept disgracefully aloof from any

active service, and that a serious accident had happened in Mr. Cloudesley's family. The two Miss Cloudesleys were crossing the Bridge Hill on their way home, when the Chester coach, with its runaway horses, who had been frightened by a blue light on the bridge, came round the dangerous corner. Leonora was knocked down; a wheel went over her ankle, and she was carried home insensible. As to Mr. Hobbes, he had been a volunteer at Mr. Hathorne's factory, and had helped considerably in its successful defence. When Martin heard this, he sighed, and looked thoroughly crest-fallen; but Hobbes generously whispered in his ear that Miss Lucy felt he had saved her brother's property by his timely warning, and desired personally to tender him her thanks. The poor youth brightened up at this news, rubbed his bruises, and managed to get off the sofa. Mr. Cloudesley and Anthony parted rather haughtily before the news of Leonora's accident was known. Mr. Cloudesley hastened home, and found his daughter fainting with agony. The surgeon was there. The hopeless character

of the fracture had been ascertained. The foot had to be amputated. Mr. Cloudesley's grief was excessively bitter. Leonora was his favorite daughter, and was chiefly interesting from her mirth and sprightliness. To see her crippled, past all remedy, would have been trying enough under any circumstances; it was a thousand times more so when he felt that his own act had probably been the cause. If no attempt to put down the fireworks had been made, he would himself have been his daughters' escort home. He remembered with proud bitterness that nothing but his own sense of duty had prevented him from leaving the Market Place to caution the two girls about their return, and the strange logic of unavailing sorrow made him accuse Anthony himself of complicity with the untoward fates. "He was sulking till the last moment," so he thought, "because he could not have his own way in everything. If he had been attending to his public duties, I might have fulfilled my private ones. He knew his power over the mob, and kept it to make a show of."

Whether Mr. Cloudesley expressed these opin-

ions to others, or whether the same ideas occurred simultaneously to Anthony's avowed enemies, it is certain that his conduct, instead of receiving the praise that might have been expected, was made the subject of all kinds of malicious rumors. Anthony was indignant; he knew that he had saved the town; that the hussars even would have arrived too late if his appearance and popularity had not delayed the progress of the riot. His haughtiness and self-will increased under this provocation; he spoke and acted petulantly and tyrannically; and even his friends began to be afraid of him.

The change his temper was undergoing was not due, however, to political causes only. The day after the riot he and Williams were talking together in the Bank parlor.

"Mrs. Forrest has outdone all of us in taking care of her friends. Mr. Hathorne owes her his factory, and Mr. Dove his life," said Williams.

"It is to be hoped they know how to be grateful," Anthony replied.

"The rescue of Martin Dove," said Owen, "is

the talk of the town. The way in which Mrs. Forrest exposed the Bank itself to destruction on his account excites general admiration."

"The town exaggerates the danger," said Anthony, uneasily.

"Rather a pity, perhaps," Williams answered; "it may give occasion to some more foolish scandal."

"Sir," said Anthony, impatiently, "my services last night ought to protect me from such insults, and I trust they will: if not, I defy the town and its scandal-mongers."

"If anything else were needed," replied Owen, "Mrs. Forrest's own behaviour ought to silence gossip on that subject. It is said that after young Dove's rescue, seeing you hard pressed, she armed all her servants with blunderbusses and sent them to your assistance, leaving herself wholly unprotected, except by that unfortunate young man. A remarkable piece of courage in so young a lady; but, to be sure, women will do anything."

Now Mary had done nothing of the kind, and

considering the numbers and the bravery of the force at her disposal, an attempt at such a sally would have been rather a hopeful affair. Anthony ought to have felt this immediately. What he really felt, however, was a sharp pang, as if one of his own blunderbusses had been fired at him. Mary had risked everything—his house, his property, his child—to save the life of a fool; she had put the fool's own life in peril for the protection of Richard Hathorne; she had done nothing to save her husband. He made no direct reply to what Williams had been saying, and the matter dropped, but Mr. Williams smiled again when he left the Bank parlor, for he saw that Anthony's eyes were the eyes of jealousy that day.

Not, however, that Anthony admitted the existence of such a feeling, even to himself. At every throb of suspicion he felt as if some one had insulted him, drove away the thought with scorn, and made parade of his confidence in Mary's virtue, as if in retaliation. In the meantime his visits to Mrs. Fraser were continued;

the information she gave him from time to time astounded him; the frequent reference to Hathorne's house, as the spot at which his secrets were betrayed, almost drove him wild. Sometimes it seemed impossible that Mary herself could have ever known the facts that were repeated to him, sometimes there appeared no escape from the conclusion that she alone could have betrayed them. In his extreme anger, and because his pride rejected now with indignation any active distrust of Mary, he began to look round desperately for some other explanation. To preserve his wife from his own doubts, he threw them on his colleagues. Daniel Hobbes, as well as Mary, was a frequent visitor at Richard Hathorne's. He was so staunch a veteran in the Porticite cause that suspicion could not so much as look at him without blushing; but Anthony did not care. Mr. Cloudesley was a man of Roman integrity in his bearing; but he might be acting a part. Mr. Cane, the druggist, had never been known to break his word; but Hathorne might be one of his customers. Mr.

Beaumont was a lawyer of high standing, who held the confidences of a hundred clients; but that might only prove him the deeper rascal. Even Anthony's own father was old, and loved a joke; who could say what kind of joke his infirmities might take pleasure in?

In a mood like this, it was not surprising that all his friends found him eccentric, obstinate, and quarrelsome. After the Guy Fawkes riots the assembling of the Club was postponed from various causes, and when at last Anthony called it together again, the summons was received by most of its members with a shrugging of the shoulders and an anticipation of mischief.

With regard to Owen Williams, his conduct at the riots had at last removed Mary's instinctive prejudice against him. The sight of him hitherto had never failed to recall unpleasing pictures of former days. She saw him henceforward under a new aspect; as her husband's deliverer, coming at full gallop through the glare of the bonfire, with the hussars behind him. He found her, now, meeting him with smiles that seemed to light the

atmosphere. He could count upon her interest when he spoke; upon her confidence when he advised; he had no difficulty in obtaining interviews with her, and no necessity to cut them short. He used these facilities but sparingly. When his voice grew thick in her presence he left her. When his hand shook in doing trifling services, he complained of over-labor. When his cheeks darkened, and the pulse grew visible in his throat, he took a phial from his pocket and spoke of apoplectic fears. Sometimes, when she was not looking at him, his eyes fixed upon her forehead first, and slowly fell till they reached the carpet; and sometimes he turned away with a compression of the lips that was like the clutch of an iron hand. But his behaviour generally was simply polite and grave, and in her own bosom Mary praised him for it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BOROUGH WALL CLUB.

On the last day of the year, the Borough Wall Club held its last meeting at the Bank in the Market Place. All its members were present: as usual, they dined together;—as usual, also, Mr. Hobbes had his story to tell, and Anthony, as perpetual chairman, had the affairs of the Porticite interest to lay before his colleagues. But everyone had a secret consciousness that things were altered; that there was something ominous in the day; and a secret fear that the bells that night might ring the dirge, not of the year only, but of the fellowship of many years as well. There had been no meeting since the day of the riot. Mary left them immediately after dinner, but instead of falling to business, as was usual, over the dessert, every-

body seemed disposed to talk of anything else in preference.

"Are the village hands getting into work again?" asked Mr. Cane the druggist, timidly, in a dead calm across the table.

"No," replied Mr. Forrest, senior. "The failure was a regular smash ; a disgraceful affair."

"That is very lamentable at this season of the year," said Mr. Cane.

"It is," replied the banker.

"It must be," said Mr. Cloudesley.

"Ah!" said Daniel Hobbes, smiling abstractedly at the oranges.

"Of course you know Hathorne will be a heavy loser," said Mr. Beaumont.

The banker nodded. Daniel Hobbes sighed. Anthony knit his brows, and pushed the wine round.

"I trust Mr. Hathorne is able to bear it," said Mr. Cane.

"I trust so," said old Mr. Forrest.

Things were looking very sprightly in the Borough Wall Club.

"I say, Hobbes," said Mr. Beaumont, cracking his nuts, "have you found anything new among the records?"

"Nothing particularly new, but many curiosities of the past, my dear sir. The mine is rich; very rich."

"Not the Porticeaster document yet, eh, Hobbes?"

"Not yet, not yet; but we must be coming nearer. I have made one discovery—one remarkable discovery. My father must have been an eccentric man—a most eccentric man."

"Perfectly astonishing!" said Beaumont, and the club laughed a little.

"I might say, a careless man—a singularly careless man," continued Hobbes. "The number of his private papers mixed up with the public documents is quite extraordinary. Never heard of a Town Clerk with so little method, though he was my own father. But he died suddenly, poor fellow. No time to change these little peculiarities. The last thing I turned over—it was only yesterday — was the

title deed to a piece of land on the Mississippi river; my own undoubted inheritance, though never heard of before, and, as I fear, not likely to be available. You shall give me your opinion, my dear sir."

"Why, this may be a richer mine than you thought of, Hobbes. What's the latitude of the land?"

"Upon my word, whether it has any, remains to be seen."

"Plenty for imagination," quoth old Mr. Forrest. "Why, you may be lawful owner of a wigwam, Hobbes."

"And fifty squaws," said Beaumont.

"With piccaninnies to match," added Mr. Cloudesley.

"Bravo, Hobbes!" cried the lawyer. "Put on your mocassins, and invite the club to hunt bears and eat turkey buzzards."

"Or tickle alligators," said Mr. Cloudesley.

"Or dig for mammoths," said Beaumont.

"My dear friends," cried Hobbes, "all these agreeable pastimes shall be yours at your discre-

tion, when the little trifle of possession is your humble servant's. Till then have patience with me, for the Mississippi river is a long one, the bears and alligators are carnivorous and not yet domesticated, and an invitation on this occasion would not only be vague as to locality, but questionable as to consequences. Meanwhile, I feel myself growing rotund in spirit, as befits the proprietor of vast domains; my fancy warms; my expectations expand themselves; I shall turn over the remaining records with cunning eyes, looking to find myself, in virtue of some dusty parchment, the lawful though dispossessed inheritor of half Porchester, including, let us hope, the property on the Bridge Hill.

The Club had been coming round fast to its old hilarity, but the mention of the Bridge Hill brought jesting and good humor to an untimely end.

"Gentlemen," said Anthony, who had been sitting silent, and had taken no part in the jokes, "Mr. Hobbes reminds me of grave and

unpleasant matters, and I have to beg your attention."

Everyone looked serious, for there was no fun in Anthony's voice or aspect.

"That Bridge Hill property," he continued, "has been the subject of negotiation for some months, and no progress has been made."

"The negotiation has been in your hands, sir," said Mr. Cloudesley.

"I am aware of that, sir, and am in consequence able to state that it has been conducted with the utmost discretion."

"Oh! of course," said Mr. Cloudesley.

"With the utmost discretion," Anthony repeated. "And its want of success hitherto has to be explained. I regret to add that the explanation is not difficult. I have reason to know that Mr. Hornbeam has been bidding against us, and that our proceedings have been betrayed."

"Betrayed!" cried several of the others, with a general look of consternation.

"Betrayed," said Anthony. "I make the

charge deliberately. Our secrets have been betrayed."

"Good heavens! sir," said Mr. Cloudesley. "We are all gentlemen. Do you know what you are saying?"

"Perfectly, Mr. Cloudesley."

"Then I must request the Club to remember by whose indiscretion it was that its first secret was made known to the enemy."

"Sir," said Anthony, "do you mean that as an open charge or as a secret insinuation?"

"As you please," replied Mr. Cloudesley, hastily.

"Then, sir, I have to state that I receive either one or the other as a personal insult, and as Chairman of the Club I require you to withdraw those words."

"Which I refuse, point-blank."

"Order!" cried Beaumont.

"Hush!" said Mr. Cane.

"Gentlemen!" exclaimed Daniel Hobbes.

"People who live in glass houses should remember the proverb," said Mr. Cloudesley, haugh-

tily. "Mr. Forrest thinks himself at liberty to make disgraceful and anonymous charges. I call upon him to state his authority."

"I am repeating your own words, sir, when I say point-blank that I refuse to do so. When I make a statement it is not the habit of the Club to question it."

"The habit of the Club," said Mr. Cloudesley, "has been to humor its Chairman to the utmost, and I for one dissent from it. I believe we have all been playing the fool to gratify Mr. Forrest's whim. The Bridge Hill is a public nuisance, and we ought to have resolved to remedy it long ago."

"Oh!" cried several at once, with a kind of horror.

"I have had bitter reason to repent our obstinacy," continued Mr. Cloudesley, "and if anyone of you had had a daughter lamed for life at that disgusting turning, his eyes, like mine, would have been opened to the selfishness of our proceedings."

Mr. Cloudesley felt that his connection with the Club was ended after such words as these,

and had already risen from his chair. Anthony rose also.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have put the Club to the test, and it has been successful. We see plainly where the treason lies. I demand your support in dealing with the traitor."

"I throw the charge back upon you, sir. Your secrets have been as safe in my bosom as in your iron chest. If your wife is trusted with those secrets and betrays them, as past experience renders probable, the disgrace belongs, not to men of honor like your colleagues, but to your own weak confidence in a pretty woman. I wish the Club good evening."

The consternation round the table was indescribable. It was no easy matter when Mr. Cloudesley left the room to prevent Anthony from following him, and the Borough Wall Club might be said to have finished its career when, yielding to his father's remonstrances and the entreaties of his friends, he at last sat down again at the head of the table, and said,

"Well, gentlemen, the traitor being unmasked

and the Club purged, my object is gained and we may return to business. Mr. Hobbes have you anything to propose?"

Daniel Hobbes, greatly afflicted and out of spirits, proposed the adjournment of the meeting, and there was no dissentient voice. A gloomy hour was spent in the drawing-room, and Mary learned, not the charge thrown out against herself, which everyone had sufficient delicacy to suppress, but the fact that Mr. Cloudesley had deserted the principles of the Porticites and had left the Club. She supposed this was enough to account for her husband's irritation and the general melancholy; and as Anthony cut her short in her questionings after the rest were gone, she forbore to press him for particulars. Notwithstanding what had happened, nobody really believed Mr. Cloudesley to have been guilty of betraying his party's secrets. Anthony himself, though he tried his utmost to feel satisfied with his own charge against his brother magistrate and sometime colleague, knew perfectly well that he was trying in vain.

Mr. Cloudesley had his faults, but his honor was unimpeachable, and the dark shadow of Anthony's doubt in Mary only grew deeper by his efforts to drive it away. The trial to his temper became greater and greater. He soon found that the Club, his own creation and the instrument of his power, was virtually extinct. Poor Mr. Cane got frightened and sent in his resignation the day after the meeting. Mr. Beaumont, the lawyer, thought he saw mischief brewing, and followed soon after. The love of Daniel Hobbes for Anthony was instinctive and life-long, and the defection of the others did not so much as suggest to him the idea of imitating them, but though Anthony might have reckoned on him to his last joke and his dying story, he was too deeply mortified to call together again the wreck of an association once so strong and so united. He resolved henceforth to stand alone; to fight his battles single-handed against all comers; to seek the proud vengeance of showing his faithless friends that he could do without them. The course of

events, however, which seemed running fast towards a catastrophe, was checked for a time by the death of old Mr. Forrest, which took place on the 7th of January. The night before being Twelfthnight, the old gentleman in a merry mood had persuaded his wife to have a gathering of little children to celebrate Master Tony's third birthday, which had just past. Master Tony was in high spirits on the occasion; drank champagne for the first time in his life; overcame the blushes of six small maidens under the mistletoe; hunted the special object of his affections into a corner, with a burnt cork in his hand; and went home at eight o'clock kicking and screaming because the nursemaid had washed his fingers. His grandfather had grown young again on the occasion, little thinking that he was indeed shaking off the infirmities both of age and time. The unusual exercise and excitement brought on an attack of gout in the stomach, and, to the deep regret of all Porchester, the good old gentleman died next day. Anthony was greatly attached to him; Mary

had become hardly less so, and his widow had been his happy wife since her seventeenth year. By his death Anthony lost not only a wise counsellor and friend, but the only one who could exercise any real authority over him. Whatever chance there might have been of a happy issue to his schemes and difficulties was much lessened by this event; and Mary also was deprived of one to whom she would have looked for help and kindness in any time of trouble. But the grief of all parties was sincere and deep, and grief is often a safe resting-place from passion; even as winds are cool, under the frowning rock, in the shadow.

CHAPTER XIV.

NAUSEA.

Anthony was entirely ignorant of any acquaintance or connection between Mrs. Fraser and Williams. The statements made to him by Mrs. Fraser all tended to prove a close intimacy between Mary and Hathorne, while the suggestions of Owen Williams led rather to the inference that Mary's favorite companion was not Hathorne, but Martin Dove. Williams was quite aware of the effect of this double doubt. He had foreseen it, and made it part of his own design in dealing with Mrs. Fraser. It kept Anthony in a state of perplexity, which prevented him from taking such active measures to get at the root of the mystery as his decided character would otherwise have led him to take.

But it is the nature of such doubts to confirm themselves when they remain long unsolved, and though Anthony loved his wife most loyally, his general confidence in her was fast fading away. She had too much womanly instinct not to be conscious of this, and it grieved her bitterly. "How can it be?" she thought. "I have kept my resolution about the child. Anthony has his way; we do not quarrel. How can it be?" Then she thought over the former years, and at last remembered Mrs. Fraser's secret story, the conversation with Anthony, the reluctance with which he yielded to her entreaties and forbore to make her break her promise. "Can this have anything to do with it?" she thought. "Does he remember that I have kept a secret from him, and does it trouble him? Ah! I have done wrong. This has surely been a barrier between us. Many times when I have been going to expostulate gently, to plead for more perfect openness, to ask him whether there should be any mysteries between a wife and her husband, this has come in the way, and I have said

nothing, because I fancied he might answer that if he had made any I had set him the example. But there can be nothing binding in such a promise. It was made years ago. The woman's story has not the slightest interest for either of us. I have never seen her again. I never heard her name. It must have been the merest whim on her part, if, indeed, she was not more or less insane at the time, which seems very likely. My duty cannot be doubtful. I must tell him this stupid story. When it is told, I may ask for greater confidence without fear. My own heart will have nothing it need hide from him, except the measure of its love, which is more than I can ever show."

So one March morning as they walked together in the garden, looking at the crocuses, Mary said to him:

"Dearest, there are a few things that we hide from one another. I want to tell you one of them."

He turned a searching glance upon her, and answered—

"If there is any secret in your possession, Mary, with which I ought to be acquainted, you can't be too early with its disclosures.

"There is one," she said; "you remember it, long ago—a secret I would not tell you before we were married. You won't care to hear it; it isn't of the least consequence to either of us, but I fear it has done injury to our confidence; you have felt, have you not, that your wife has known something she would not tell you, and it has made you distrustful of her?"

"I cannot say," replied Anthony, with a disappointed look, "that this particular secret has had any such effect, my love. I have rarely thought of it."

He had expected some more interesting confession.

"It has certainly had that effect in one way," said Mary; "it has kept me from entreating you to tell me all your thoughts, for I feared you would upbraid me with it if I did so."

Anthony grew frigid. Did she suspect his visits to Mrs. Fraser? Was she going to sound

him? That was the question that occurred to him, and he replied—

"Such entreaties would, under any circumstances, have been presumptuous, Mary. My thoughts are necessarily my own."

Mary felt grieved, and looked so.

"Well, dearest," she said, "you shall at least have no reason to complain of me. I am going to tell you that foolish secret."

"You do so under the belief that you will thus establish a claim upon me for similar confidence?"

"I hope so, Anthony."

"Then I must decline to listen to your communication. I agree to no such compact. I recognise no such obligation."

"Dear love, I am not bargaining; I will make no claim at all; it shall all be left to your own generosity; I will tell you this simply as a relief to myself, asking nothing in return."

"It is much easier to tell the secrets of others, than to respect them, Mary. Keep your promise and be silent."

"You absolved me from my promise, Anthony."

"I retract the absolution."

"Dearest, I am sure a promise of that kind is nothing between a wife and her husband. Only consider."

"Well, keep it," he said, angrily.

"Have I vexed you, Anthony?"

"Have you nothing else to tell me, Mary?"

"Nothing."

He turned from her—the word "hypocrite" on his tongue.

"Let this subject be dropped," he said, looking over his shoulder, and he walked away. Mary stood, half confused and very sorrowful, bending over an early daffodil. She picked the flower at last and threw it over the garden-wall. It was wet with tears.

CHAPTER XV.

PRISONER'S HOLE.

Betsy, the nursemaid, had a cousin, and his attributes were cousinly. For example, he was in the habit of leaving his work every Tuesday afternoon when it was fine weather. Not that the connection between cousins and the day of Mars is universal, but in the present instance it was particular. Tuesday was at this time a day on which the Borough Wall meadow was kept closed for the private use of its proprietor; and in the afternoon Master Tony was usually sent there with his nurse to play about the ruins. Betsy's cousin was the fool of fate; a hebdomadal series of accidental events persisted in bringing him to a weak part of the Borough Wall meadow fence whenever he left his work, in fine weather,

on Tuesday afternoon. When it rained, the series was interrupted, and when he took a holiday on Wednesday, there was a certain cynosure named Hannah guiding his path that day. But on fine Tuesday afternoons, being brought up suddenly by the weak part of the Borough Wall meadow fence, the spirit which makes men heroes made a trespasser of Betsy's cousin. Resenting the impediment, he boldly cleared it, and, always to the astonishment of both, to Betsy's high displeasure, to the admiration of the lesser loves, and to the content of Master Tony, was found face to face with Betsy under the ruins. Master Tony's content arose from the circumstance that, having appeared before each other in this way, Betsy's cousin and herself retained their relative positions for a considerable time, and that during this interval Master Tony was at liberty, without let or hindrance, to climb into as many dangers as he had hairs upon his head. The interview always ended in the same way. The distance between the two having gradually diminished (each observing nothing but the

other's eyes) till Betsy's sleeve and the cousinly elbow came into virtual contact, the bent elbow suddenly straightened itself, there was a snatch and a giggle, a capture and an escape, and Betsy ran round the ruins calling out pretty sharply,

"Master Tony! Master Tony! where are you, sir? Master Tony! you naughty boy! How dare you, sir? Let me catch you at it again, will you? It's time to go home."

It was mentioned, a good way back, that there was a certain underground passage connected with the old Borough Wall, and also that Mrs. Fraser had made a curious discovery, by means of which she became a witness of the Archery meeting in the meadow before Anthony's marriage.

At the end of the ruins furthest from the town there was a sinking of the ground, laying bare a perpendicular piece of the sandstone rock, about ten feet deep, a part of the natural foundation on which the wall was built. In this piece of rock was a rough opening, the size of a common doorway. All was dark when you looked in. The opening was the mouth of an excavation which

ran back under the ruins for a few yards, then turned suddenly and became a long, descending, subterranean gallery, about six feet high by two or three feet wide, roughly cut through the sandstone and opening at last in a low narrow meadow by the river side, where the stream bent from its former course, some two hundred yards or more from the Borough Wall. This meadow had once been part of the river-bed and was often flooded. The rock, covered with grass and divided into small fields, sloped gradually down to it from the ruins, ending abruptly in a low cliff which had formerly been the bank of the river, and in which a series of natural caverns had been hollowed by the action of the water. The gallery ended in one of these caverns, and this end of it was not very easily found, because, with the light behind you, all the little caves looked dark, and they were all a good deal like one another. The existence of this gallery was well known. It was called Prisoner's Hole. There was a tradition that a strong tower had once been built against the end of the Borough Wall; that a mysterious

stranger had been confined there, and that he had effected his own escape by excavating the sandstone rock from his prison to the river—with his hands and nails only, the legend added: and perhaps the probabilities of the story were not greatly affected by the addition. Concerning this gallery many learned discussions had taken place in former years, and at one time strangers were taken through it as one of the sights of the town. At last in trying to widen a narrow part of it, where ladies suffered generally from the abrasion of their garments, a portion of the roof was knocked down; its removal was not easy, the attempt to clear it was given up, and the passage was stopped. When nobody could any longer enter at one end and come out at the other, the interest in it died away. So it continued for years, and Mrs. Fraser was the first person who discovered that the passage had been re-opened. Who had cleared away the obstacle was never fully ascertained, but when subsequent events again called public attention to Prisoner's Hole, it was remembered that on the occasion of a great burglary some

years before, the robbers had been traced to the Borough Wall meadow, but no further; and it was supposed they had cleared the passage beforehand, secretly, to make their escape more easy. Mrs. Fraser's discovery was accidental. Many people went into the entrance to the gallery, as far as the first turning; but none ventured further on account of the darkness. Mrs. Fraser, hovering about the meadow when she came to the neighbourhood of Porchester after her husband's death, happened to pry into this darkness at a time when the sun was setting with unusual splendor just opposite the caverns by the river side. The gallery beyond the turning was nearly straight, and the intense brightness of the horizon caused a glimmer of light from the other end to reach Mrs. Fraser's eye. She was adventurous enough to follow it. She congratulated herself on having done so, since her discovery gave her the means of ready and unobserved access to the Borough Wall meadow. She could walk along the river side, where there was no path,

except one rarely used, leading only into the field in which the caverns were; could ascend the subterranean gallery, emerge at the end of the ruins among old hawthorn bushes which grew on the lower level about the opening in the rock, and by stepping on one or two ledges obtain views in all directions without fear of being seen. Mrs. Fraser had made frequent use of her discovery. Anthony, Mary, and the child had all been watched and scrutinized again and again. She kept the secret jealously. Owen Williams alone had been entrusted with it, and under his directions she had used it once or twice for the furtherance of their mutual designs. It was not by his advice, however, or indeed for any definite purpose of her own, that she groped her way up Prisoner's Hole a few hours after Mary had thrown her daffodil over the garden wall. She left Chosen Forest with the young buds shaking in the March wind, but with no sympathy between herself and Spring. An unusual sadness had seized upon her, a desponding, aching, tearful misery,

and she went out chiefly because she was driven out, the hopeless spirit was so strong. She looked hard at the flowing water as she walked along the lonely path by the river side, and once she stopped with her face towards it, and then turned shuddering away. The day was Tuesday, and it was fine. When Mrs. Fraser peered through the hawthorn bushes she saw Betsy and Betsy's cousin under the ash trees, but she did not see the child. Changing her position, and looking along the back of the ruins, she saw Master Tony on the narrow strip of grass behind, trying hard to pull a large projecting nail out of the wooden palings. Mrs. Fraser had ventured on two occasions to cross the field and speak to the child when she saw him in it, and by the gift of certain foreign sweetmeats, delicious beyond anything he had tasted, she had made herself in the boy's thoughts a benignant mystery, to be looked for with wide eyes and dreamy expectation. Having an indefinite idea that such sweets as these must be forbidden joys, he never

spoke of them, and though at times a vague mention of "the lady" came from his lips, he invariably refused to give any information as to his meaning.

Mrs. Fraser watched the boy as he tugged with all his might at the great nail. All his might, however, was less than enough; and finding his efforts fruitless, he bethought himself of turning the piece of obstinate old iron to better account, by putting his foot on it and trying whether, with this assistance, he could not climb over the palings. This enterprise was progressing favorably; one of his legs was already across the upper bar, and there was a very fair prospect of his precipitating himself into the river, sixty feet below, when Mrs. Fraser, stepping forward from the hawthorn bushes, caught him by the shoulder and lifted him safely to the ground again.

"Child, you might have been killed; but you are like your father."

The boy recognised her, but looked at her this time with doubtful approbation.

"You no business to take me down."

"You had no business to be climbing."

"You take me down again, me teach you something!" said the young gentleman, with a consequential toss of his head.

Mrs. Fraser smiled and produced her sweetmeats, which Master Tony accepted without hesitation, though still pouting a little.

"Me not let you take me down," said he, and he turned away from her with the sugar between his lips. Betsy's voice was now heard calling him on the other side of the ruins, and that exemplary nurserymaid appeared immediately afterwards, hot and breathless with the energy of her search.

"Oh, you naughty boy! oh, fie, Master Tony!" but Mrs. Fraser turned the tables upon her by describing the child's danger and rebuking her for her neglect. Betsy took the boy home, a little crest-fallen herself, while Mrs. Fraser, sadder even than before, passed again behind the hawthorn bushes and retraced her steps through Prisoner's Hole.

"Now, Master Tony, if you tell your mamma what you've been doing, I 'll just smack you well; mind that!"

"Me not tell my mamma, Betty; but if you smack me, me send you to Jellicho."

Whereupon Betsy and her charge re-entered the Bank garden with this mutual understanding.

CHAPTER XVI.

BELLADONNA.

Mrs. Fraser returned to the Chancery House in her usual secret and solitary way; desired her Italian maid to prepare tea for her an hour sooner than usual, because she was weary and low in spirits; and sitting down to her easel, retouched a melancholy sky and dreary landscape with washes of a still sadder tone. Owen Williams paid her a visit while she was thus occupied. She seemed glad to see him, in an unhappy way; put her painting aside and sat down with him by the window, for it was not yet evening.

"You look dull, Mrs. Fraser," said Owen, after a quick examination of her face.

"Mr. Williams, I am perfectly miserable."

"Very solitary here, madam."

"Worse than solitary, a thousand times."

"Has Mr. Forrest been here lately, madam?"

"He came yesterday."

"You quarrelled, perhaps?"

We never quarrel. It would be better if we did."

"His visits give you no satisfaction, it appears?"

"Satisfaction! they are tearing me to pieces."

"You wish them to be discontinued then?"

"No; never!"

"Mrs. Fraser, suppose you were to be candid with me."

"And tell you my feelings, I suppose?"

"I know them, madam."

"Good heavens! If you do, Mr. Williams, you must be a perfect fiend."

"For what reason, Mrs. Fraser?"

"For what reason!" she repeated, impetuously. "For leading me to this; for bringing me to this place of torment; for lighting these fires round me; for putting this burning shame upon my head."

"Madam, you had an interest in Mr. Anthony Forrest; you desired to do him some service; I have enabled you to gratify that desire."

She answered nothing. She rocked herself to and fro.

"You wished for his society," Owen continued. "I have given you his society. You thought it would be a gain to yourself to lay him under an obligation. In his own opinion he is under many obligations to you. His visits are as secret as could be wished and almost as frequent as you choose to make them."

"The greater the shame, the worse the misery," said Mrs. Fraser, passionately. "You had no right to do this for me, if I prayed for it on my knees."

"Your meaning, madam, is, doubtless, that clandestine meetings of this kind are dangerous; and that passion, kindled or heightened by them, is shameful."

She blushed deeply, and looked him fiercely in the face.

"You dare to say this, Mr. Williams!"

"I take it, madam, that I express your own sentiments."

"And does that justify you in uttering them before my face? You are the accomplice, the designer, the chief agent in the whole of it. More than that, Mr. Williams, you are a gentleman, and I——"

She turned her face away and hid it. Owen seemed to smile slightly under his heavy brows.

"Madam, your indignation is natural; I make no complaint, but I have an explanation to offer. Supposing the case to be as we have put it, you might with great propriety call me a villain, but you are not yet perfectly aware of all the circumstances. I have aided you in your secret meetings with a married man, it is true, but not, Mrs. Fraser, with a man whom you cannot marry."

She turned slowly towards him again with incredulous curiosity, looked keenly at his impenetrable face, and dropped her eyes.

"You treat me," she said, "with bitter satire. You mean to remind me that life is doubtful;

that when I am old and shrivelled I may still see Mr. Forrest a widower before I die."

"That is not my meaning, Mrs. Fraser. The law adds two conditions to the marriage bond. To hold her husband in its fetters it is necessary not only that the wife should live, but also that she should be faithful."

Mrs. Fraser started violently and turned deadly pale. There was a short silence between them.

"Do you mean," she said, almost under her breath, "that Mary Forrest is——" she paused again.

"The charge is serious, Mrs. Fraser, and the proof generally difficult, but I believe it may be obtained. I need not point out to you how deeply Mr. Forrest is interested in having it brought to light, or what must be his objection to anyone who should free him from a dishonored marriage."

"Is it possible, Mr. Williams?"

"These things, madam, are always possible."

She colored, but shrank proudly from him.

"You mistake, sir."

"I meant, under the circumstances," he replied. She bowed her head slightly.

"Does Anthony know this?"

"At present he barely doubts. It is not his character to be suspicious. A truth like this must be forced upon him. It ought to be forced upon him, I conceive."

"It ought indeed. Have you undertaken this dreadful office?"

"With your assistance, Mrs. Fraser, I have resolved to undertake it."

"What can I do?"

"At present only this: make yourself as agreeable as you can to Mr. Forrest; get back as much of his regard as you find means to do. This may lessen the blow, make him more open to conviction, and prepare the way for better things afterwards. In a short time I shall ask your further assistance in procuring the necessary proof."

"Mr. Williams!" she could hardly speak, her breathing was so hurried, "do you know what

you are saying? what you are doing to me? For these months and months I have been meeting Anthony Forrest under a pressure that has kept me calm, but has nearly stifled me. I can take it off, I can try to win him back; my beauty is not all ruined, my power is not all dead; I can still make myself what Mary Griffiths could never be. But I shall let out such gathered passion, such smothered fire, that success or madness must be the alternative. If you deceive me or if you fail me, you will have a maniac at your heels."

He met her glaring eyes with his keen and cold ones.

"I undertake, Mrs. Fraser, with your assistance, to prove Mary Forrest a faithless wife."

"You do?—you do? But what then? Oh, Mr. Williams, what then? It will break his heart, or he will forgive her."

"He will divorce her, Mrs. Fraser. Do you know so little of him? He will divorce her, and be at liberty to make a better choice. If gratitude has any weight with him he will choose here."

"Gratitude!" she cried, getting up from her seat, and pressing her forehead against the cold marble of the mantel-piece; "gratitude for such a service! He will hate me!"

"When you think more quietly about it, madam, you will change your opinion."

She had already changed it. She stood with hot cheeks and flaming eyes, staring through the window-panes.

"Divorced from her; freed from shame!" she said, half-whispering. "Yes; there will be cause enough for gratitude. I saved his child's life this very day."

"A happy accident, madam. You perceive heaven helps our enterprise."

Whether he spoke in piety or blasphemy would have been hard to say for anything in the external signs.

"I had no love for Mary Griffiths' child," she said; "but the boy is like his father."

Mr. Williams became curious, and obtained from her all the details of her afternoon adventure by the ruins.

"What you have told me may be of service," said he. "We must have patience, madam, and proceed cautiously. Have an interview with Mr. Forrest to-morrow—control yourself. This business requires time."

He gave her a few instructions, most of which had to be repeated, for her thoughts were inclined to wander.

"Is it Richard Hathorne?" she asked, as he opened the door to go.

"We will mention no names at present," Owen answered; and he left her. He left her to an evening of strange excitement. Was this to be the end of it all? Was her triumph to come at last, by means so unexpected, in a way so shocking to her womanhood, so grateful to her passions? She called it justice; she clothed her hatred for Mary in the dress of virtuous indignation; she thought of Anthony, first, as properly punished for his scorn of her; then as an object of pity whom she would forgive and deliver; finally, as a fellow-sufferer with herself through mutual errors, which a happy chance—she was less bold

than Owen and did not say Providence—was going to repair. In the midst of her mental tumult, she remembered the words of her own wild imprecation—"Let her curse you; let her be false to you." They struck her with something like awe. The hand of Fate seemed over her and she was quieter afterwards.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

"RICHARD HATHORNE is a bankrupt, Mary," said Anthony, on Wednesday morning, coming into her dressing-room soon after breakfast, while she was putting on her bonnet. He spoke sternly, watching her as he did so.

"A bankrupt, Anthony!" Mary thought for the moment that her husband had made him so, and blushed scarlet. Anthony frowned darkly. "That is not all," he said. "His failure is a disgraceful one."

"No, surely, dearest. It cannot be disgraceful."

"When your husband states a fact, Mary, he expects you to believe him."

"Is it your doing, Anthony? Is it you who have made a bankrupt of him?"

"In justice it should have been, but in fact it is not."

"Thank Heaven for that!" said Mary.

"Thank Heaven for blessings, Mary; not for temptations."

"Temptations, husband?"

"When unworthy wishes are fulfilled, Mary, I call it a temptation."

"Whatever can you mean?"

"I have no explanation to give, but I have a command to lay upon you. Twice already I have desired you, on perfectly sufficient grounds, to break off all association with the Hathornes. On both occasions I have allowed a tenderness for your feelings to overcome my purpose and silence my judgment. Do not expect, Mary, to find the same weakness in me again. I repeat my command, for the third time, and finally, and I do so that it may be obeyed."

"Dear love, you cannot be in earnest. To choose such a moment as this to turn our backs upon them! Why, if it were no question of love, if they were mere acquaintances, it would be utterly cruel and wrong!"

"I have not come to argue this question, Mary; my will is inexorable. Richard Hathorne's bankruptcy is a discreditable one; so discreditable that to the world outside it is a sufficient reason for the step I desire you to take. There are other reasons of which the world may as well know nothing: we may speak of them by and by; at present I do not choose to let this opportunity slip away."

"Anthony, you've listened to me before; I'm sure you'll let me speak again for Lucy's sake—and for your better angel's."

"I take it for granted that you have distinctly heard me, Mary—"

"I am certain, dearest, you will let me speak—"

"If you have not listened, Mary, I have only to repeat my definite command that your acquaintance with the Hathornes ceases from this moment."

He turned and left the room, shutting the door behind him. Mary stood confounded before her looking-glass, with her bonnet in her hand. The sweetest temper has its wilful moments,

and this was one of Mary's. She felt herself ill-used and trampled upon. She looked in the mirror and saw her round lips pouting, and her cheeks a-glow, and she saw them with a certain approbation. Something had upset his temper; he was unjust and unkind; his refusal to accept her offered confidence or to extend his own the day before was a piece of unreasonable perversity; his dislike of Hathorne arose from party spirit and was unworthy of him; if he had failed shamefully, it was shameful to desert him at such a time, and Lucy at least was innocent, whatever his faults might be. She herself had not promised to obey her husband's command; he had not even asked her for such a promise! If he expected obedience, he certainly ought to ask for it. He could not accuse her of breaking her word if she went to see Lucy that very morning, as she had intended to do; and Lucy must be in such trouble. She put on her bonnet rather hastily: the lips in the looking-glass were still pouting and the cheeks still red. Mary went out: she walked slowly

down the Market Place, towards the street leading to Richard Hathorne's. Then she thought of some shopping that should be done, and she went and did it. Then, standing hesitating at the shop door, she turned in another direction and paid a visit to a poor woman who was ill. Coming out again she stood once more hesitating. "If I told him I was going, it would be less like a quarrel," she thought; and she went home. She entered by the back door, thinking she should see Anthony. The door of the Bank parlor was closed and the new junior clerk (the head clerk had become a partner since old Mr. Forrest's death) informed her that Anthony would be engaged for half an hour. So she went up-stairs into the drawing-room to arrange some violets brought home by Master Tony. Daniel Hobbes was announced while she was doing this. He came in looking so kind and cheerful that it did her good to see him; but there was an unusual tenderness about him, and his friendly words, "My dear Mrs. Forrest, I disturb you in one of

Flora's occupations," were said with a suppressed sigh.

"These are Tony's violets, Mr. Hobbes, and they take a long time. He expects me to put them all in water, but he forgets to pick the stalks as well as the flowers."

"The happy innocence of childhood, my dear madam, gathering the sweets of life without thinking how to keep them. You are dressed and going out, and I am decidedly in the way."

"Not at all, Mr. Hobbes; I have just been walking and have not taken my bonnet off. You have heard this sad news about Richard Hathorne?"

"Too true, too true," said Mr. Hobbes, with another sigh. "A most melancholy affair. He has been imprudent, imprudent; I'm afraid everything is lost; his character too, they say, but I can't believe it. Poor Miss Lucy—it's a great shock; a terrible shock—I had some particular business to talk about, my dear madam, relating to Miss Lucy."

"Pray, tell it, Mr. Hobbes. Tony is out and I have nothing to do."

"You are very kind, Mrs. Forrest; always very kind. It's quite a little story; I may say almost a romance. I have been going over the Borough records and papers for the last four years, madam, as you know, in search after the Porticeaster document; quite unsuccessful so far, but there is still much to be done. My father left them in singular confusion; mixed up his private papers with the public ones, and dying suddenly, as you know, had no opportunity of putting them to rights beforehand. A few months ago I turned up the title to some land on the Mississippi river, and we all made jokes about it. As to the value of the possession my expectation is that the jokes were the best part of it, but in other respects it turned out to have a serious bearing on Miss Lucy's interest. Miss Lucy's parents, madam, were Americans. Her father and mine were friends. Her father left America and came to England when Miss Lucy was very young, and about that time my father had a

notion of leaving England and going to America. Mr. Hathorne had a grant of land on the Mississippi river and my father had a large field near Porchester, about fifty acres, and they agreed to make an exchange. The exchange was made, and Mr. Hathorne, senior, settled the field upon Miss Lucy's mother and after her upon Miss Lucy. My father drew all the deeds, and they were left in his hands. Mr. Hathorne went back to America to settle his affairs, and died two days after he landed, and my father himself died before the news came. Now nobody but themselves knew a word about the exchange they had just made, and all the documents were mixed up and lost among the papers in the Town Clerk's office. So you see, my dear Mrs. Forrest, I stepped very innocently into my father's shoes, took possession of the field of fifty acres, and have been enjoying Miss Lucy's lawful inheritance for near half my life; a mistake to be very much regretted, though not at present to be helped. The only extenuating circumstance is in the fact that I came upon the papers which explain this

little affair only yesterday evening; a most fortunate coincidence, for Miss Lucy will come into her rights just when they are most valuable—most valuable," and he sighed again.

"What a strange story, Mr. Hobbes! Does Lucy know about it?"

"Not yet, my dear madam; not yet. That is where I have hoped for your assistance. If you would have the goodness to relate the circumstances to Miss Lucy, and tell her that the field is hers in her own right, and if you could say a word in favor of Mr. Martin Dove, who is rather timid and may be afraid to speak—that is, my dear Mrs. Forrest, if Miss Lucy and Mr. Dove —unfortunately Mr. Dove's own income is very small—if he and Miss Lucy could have it pointed out to them that they might live—not in proper elegance, but still perhaps happily — happily — on the rental of the field, it might be a relief to all parties, considering the trouble into which Lucy and her brother have just now fallen, madam."

There was a certain quiver in his voice and

a curious dimness about his eyes; and Mary, as she looked and listened, saw him through and through with the quickness of a woman.

"Mr. Hobbes," she said, very gently, "why do you not take this message yourself to Lucy?"

"My dear madam, I have known Miss Lucy a long while—a long while. If you could have the goodness to do this little business for me—"

Mary could not resist the entreaty of his eyes. The work was too pure, the office too sacred, for even her husband's interdict to interfere.

"I will take your message," she said, giving her hand to her old friend. "You make me the bearer of a noble sacrifice."

"A lawful restitution, madam; certainly nothing but a lawful restitution."

"Oh! you mean as regards the land," said Mary. "But, Mr. Hobbes, is not this the whole of your property?"

"Unfortunately, madam, I inherited no more and I have amassed nothing, which is greatly

to be regretted, since it makes it quite impossible for me to restore at once the rents I have received already."

"But how, then, do you think of living?"

He sighed, and then laughed a little.

"I think I may give lectures, my dear madam; lectures about fossils and the ancients. If my lectures prove unprofitable, I will write the history of Porchester. If that publication should be a failure, I must embark for the Mississippi river and seek my paternal inheritance among the alligators."

As soon as Mr. Hobbes had left, Mary went down again to the Bank. "I will tell him plainly that I am going to Lucy," she thought. "It will be better than going first and telling him afterwards."

Anthony was out, however. He had gone on horseback; over Chosen Forest, the clerk believed, to inquire about some property. He was not likely to be back for some hours. A note from Lucy arrived at the same time. "You know our great grief," it said. "Richard is obliged

to go to France immediately for perhaps two or three weeks; not to be out of the way, but to save some of his property. He leaves in three hours. Come to us."

"Poor Hathorne!" thought Mary. "How this news of mine would comfort him on his journey! He shall hear it before he goes."

She left the note in the Bank parlor for Anthony to see, thinking it would help to justify her, and went to Lucy Hathorne. She found Lucy with wet eyes, but bearing up bravely. It was so kind of Mary to come to her; she thought everybody else would forsake them now, but she knew Mary would not. Richard had gone to make some last arrangements with his lawyer, but he would be in presently, and would be so grateful for Mary's kindness in coming. Richard had been led away by other people, and of course had been imprudent, though it was that village failure that had really ruined him; but he had done it all for the sake of giving his sister a splendid fortune; and she cared nothing for fortune, not she; she could earn her living like

other people; she could teach music or serve at a pastrycook's, she was sure: and she cared for nothing but to have her brother with her, and to see her dear friend Mary sometimes, and —well, all the rest of her friends might do as they pleased. She thought that Martin Dove would come to be talked at anyhow, and old Mr. Hobbes was so kind; and, indeed, it would just show whose friendship was worth having; that was all.

Mary let her run on till she had relieved herself, and then quietly told her she had some pleasant news for her, giving her very simply Daniel Hobbes' message about her own undoubted title to the field. Lucy jumped up, very hot and red, and seized Mary by both hands.

"Oh, my dear! I couldn't think of such a thing! It's quite impossible. Take the field from Mr. Hobbes, my dear! It's quite out of the question!"

"But it is your own, Lucy."

"Oh, I don't believe anything about it. I know it's all a mistake and nothing but Mr. Hobbes'

kindness. He is such a kind man, you know. Besides, if it was as much mine as my own waistband, I couldn't take it from him; no, never; and I won't hear about it. Why it's all the poor man has to live upon, you know!"

"But you have nothing, Lucy——"

"Oh, yes; I have a great deal; I've got my head and my fingers, and my face and my tongue, and all that; and I'm young, and we shall be very happy somehow, Richard and I. Oh! bless me, my dear! Won't you take your bonnet off? Now do come up-stairs, and see how I have been packing!"

"He thinks the field would be a nice little wedding portion for you if you and Martin Dove were married."

"Martin Dove! oh, my gracious! Martin Dove and me! Why, my dear, I should as soon think of marrying my own baby, if I ever had one."

"Oh, Lucy! Are you quite sure of that?"

"Of course, I am. Martin Dove! He's such a dear good goose, and you may talk to him

as long as ever you please; and I give him all my errands that don't want doing, and he forgets half of them and makes such a mess of the other half; I'd do anything in the world for Martin Dove, except marry him; that would be too much of a joke. Poor boy! If he once begins to marry, there'll never be any end of it. If he married twenty wives, he'd forget it all next day."

Mary took her by the waist, and kissed her.

"Lucy dear, I am so glad, though not for poor Martin's sake; but I think there is great happiness in store for somebody."

"Oh, for ever so many people, my dear; but don't say a word about the field."

"Very well, Lucy, I shall send Mr. Hobbes to talk about it himself."

"Mary!"

They looked in each other's eyes, Lucy blushing, Mary smiling; then Lucy fell upon Mary's neck and began to shake with sobs and laughter.

"Don't tell him, Mary; he can't care for me; I am too young."

Mary stroked her hair and answered that we should see. Richard Hathorne's knock was heard at the door. He had made his last arrangements and was ready to go. The coach would start in an hour. He looked terribly depressed and ill. Lucy begged her friend not to leave them, and she stayed to see him off. Then she took Lucy to her home again and went in search of Mr. Hobbes. She found him at his lodgings, already busy about his first lecture. It took all her powers of persuasion to overcome his astonishment, to satisfy him that Martin Dove's suit was altogether hopeless, and that Lucy Hathorne might be his own. When she at last succeeded, he sat for some time in silence, resting his fine square grizzled head upon his hand, looking round at his fossils with moist eyes and a subdued smile of mingled innocence and solemnity about his lips.

"He makes the alligators, but He remembers His little children."

He spoke in a low voice, and it was not to Mary that he was speaking. He rose slowly,

took his hat from its accustomed place, and put it on with a grave reverence. Then he gave Mary his arm and took her down-stairs. They walked a little way together, and then parted. Daniel Hobbes went on his way to Lucy, and Mary—to her husband.

END OF VOL. II.

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